The Guardian Weekly

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US puts $2 million bounty on bombers

Gary Younge in Washington and Lucy Hannan in Nairobi

THE United States announced a $2 million reward for information leading to the conviction of the bombers of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, a similar bounty to that which successfully netted suspects in the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York.

The US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, announced the $2 million reward in Washington. Terrorism, she said, "can never, will never, deter America from its purpose or presence around the globe".

Investigators suspect that the bombers used Semtex, which, they say, would imply the involvement of a large organisation, even a state. The US defence secretary, William Cohen, said the attacks on Friday last week were "long in the planning" and "not the act of some isolated individual, a madman".

Washington sent several hundred Americans to Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam to investigate the atrocity in which more than 200 people died, most of them African. More than 60 FBI agents are working with local investigators. US officials hope a security camera at the Tanzania embassy will yield some clues. It was pointed at the spot where the bomb exploded.

The death toll from the two bombings, which came almost simultaneously at 10.35am on Friday last week, had risen to 210 by Tuesday with more than 5,000 injured. The bomb in Nairobi, which accounted for at least 200 of the dead, contained as much as 270kg of explosive. Twelve Americans died, all in Nairobi.

Meanwhile the author of a report into embassy safety said that security in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam may have been inadequate.

Bobby Inman, who headed a commission set up in 1985 after the US embassies in Kuwait and Beirut were bombed along with a marine barracks in Beirut, blamed Congress and the state department for failing to follow recommendations he made 13 years ago, that US embassies should be set back 23 metres from the street and be far more heavily fortified. Neither of the bombed embassies met these standards, nor had they been placed on a state department priority list for a security upgrade.

The under-secretary of state, Thomas Pickering, said that congressional representatives who rebuffed President Clinton's demands for money to improve security worldwide had been trying to make amends since the bombings. US embassies were subject to 30,000 threats annually, he said.

The grim search through the rubble at the Nairobi site, led by Israeli rescue teams, continued this week, but hopes have faded of finding any more survivors in the wreckage of Ufundi House, the building behind the embassy that took the full force of the blast.

On Monday the teams reached the secretarial training college which was housed in the Ufundi building, and started bringing out bodies. "There were many women, leaning on their desks crushed by the roof against the floor," said an Israeli surgeon, Nahum Nesher.

At the city mortuary, relatives and friends rushed towards the Red Cross van bringing in the dead, crushed beyond recognition.

A victim is pulled from the blast scene near the US embassy in Nairobi. Explosions in the Kenyan and Tanzanian capitals last Friday left more than 200 dead and 5,000 injured PHOTOGRAPH: GEORGE MULALA

David Hirst, page 13
Washington Post, page 15

UN opts for diplomacy in Iraq stand-off

Mark Tran in New York

THE United Nations Security Council last week declared Iraq's decision to stop co-operating with UN weapons inspectors in protest at eight years of economic sanctions as "totally unacceptable" but refrained from issuing any warnings to Iraq.

Instead, council members called for an "early resumption of the dialogue" between Iraq and international inspectors. The United States, while calling for a strong diplomatic response, indicated that force is a distant prospect.

"This is not a battle between the US and Iraq," the US ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, said. "We will not be goaded by Iraq or any other irresponsible nation into taking action."

Iraq's latest act of obstruction, preventing inspectors from carrying out their work by refusing officials to accompany them, came as the Security Council and the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, heard from Richard Butler, the chief UN weapons inspector, on his failed talks in Baghdad earlier this month.

The council emphasised the need for diplomacy to resolve the latest standoff. "The Iraqi position is not a closed one," said Mr Annan, who brokered an agreement in February that averted US and British air strikes against Iraq. He suggested a comprehensive review of Iraq's disarmament as well as further talks with Iraqi officials.

There were divisions within the UN Security Council, however. Yuri Fedotov, Russia's deputy representative at the UN, implied that Mr Butler bore some responsibility for the breakdown in talks.

Washington Post, page 15

Grief unites Kenyans as death toll mounts

David Gough in Nairobi

AS VOLUNTEERS and rescue teams continued to dig their way through the devastation caused by the bomb attack in central Nairobi, the people of Kenya set about coming to terms with the single worst act of violence in their history.

Nairobi university students marched to the site of the blast on Monday singing "Who has made this bomb, and why have they attacked us?"

Seferinus Okoth, one of the students, said he hoped something positive might yet come out of the tragedy. "I think this will bring the people of Kenya together," he said. Hundreds of students held a candlelight vigil at the site of the bomb.

With an estimated 100 people still missing on Tuesday, Israeli and French emergency teams continued digging in the rubble of the Ufundi Co-operative building behind the embassy, which bore the brunt of the blast.

Local residents were quick to praise the Israeli army rescue team, which took the lead role over the weekend in the search for survivors.

More than 200 Israeli soldiers and medics, equipped with sniffer dogs and electronic tracking equipment, flew in last Saturday morning and immediately began organising a rescue effort which had been hamstrung by a lack of equipment and bewildered by the sheer scale of the blast. A team member said it was one of the biggest bomb sites he had seen. "It's a real mess," he said.

The rescue team includes medics specialising in trauma, and a rescue unit. The team proved itself in Buenos Aires in 1994 when it pulled several survivors from the wreckage of a Jewish community centre after a similar attack.

Israeli rescue workers privately criticised their US counterparts, who they said had focused on efforts to rescue embassy employees. "We had a real fight with them just to let us put up our lights on the embassy wall. I've never seen such behaviour," said one.

Samuel Nganga, who was rescued last Saturday night, spoke about his ordeal from his hospital bed. "An hour seemed like a day," he said.

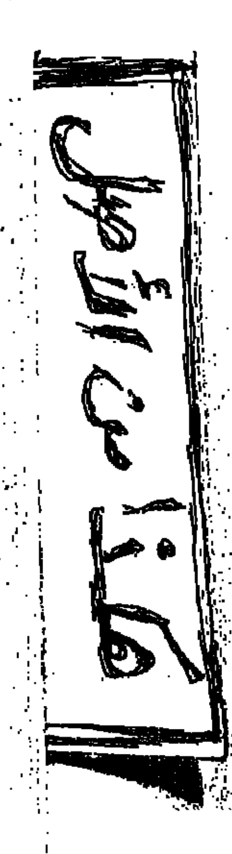
Outside the hospital, relatives were still poring over lists of the casualties posted on the wall, a now familiar sight at Nairobi's hospitals. People unable to find their relations are told to look in the city mortuary, choked with 107 victims of the attack.

Relatives waited as bodies were delivered throughout Monday. The Rev John Mungai spent his third consecutive day waiting to identify his daughter Margaret, aged 20, who was in the Ufundi building when it collapsed. "There is no more hope for her," he said. "Each night I dream of her, and she is crying for help, but there is no one to help her."

As he spoke, a Red Cross truck arrived at the morgue, carrying yet more bodies. Mr Mungai broke away to join the throng of distraught relatives as they pushed and shoved to see who was inside.

A Red Cross worker opened the back of the truck and looked down on the crowd. Reaching into the vehicle he pulled out a single white shoe and waved it solemnly in the air, waiting for someone to recognise it.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80



When Aborigines fail the white performance test

ALLOW me to add my voice to what I sincerely hope is a loud chorus of protest against the sentiments of John F Bent (August 2). Of the parade of absurdities offered in his letter, I will take issue here with only one: the claim that after "billions" of dollars have supposedly been spent by Australian governments in "trying to make Aborigines perform like other Australians — there are still no indigenous doctors, scientists or engineers".

First, I would be very surprised if government spending on Aboriginal welfare has in fact run into "billions", but more importantly I would take issue with the hierarchy of "performance", apparently commended by Bent, which has as its apex such professions as doctor, scientist or engineer (or lawyer, or architect, or business executive, or any other predominantly non-indigenous field).

The insistence that Aboriginal Australians "perform" — the term is as revealing as it is objectionable — in a manner commensurate with the middle-class aspirations of their white neighbours goes hand in hand with the refusal to acknowledge that white Australia might actually have something to learn from indigenous equivalents to what we call medicine, technology and other forms of knowledge.

It is precisely the same sort of colonising attitude as that displayed in the familiar argument that developing countries should adopt wholesale International Monetary Fund economic "reforms" predicated upon the tenets of Western free-market capitalism.

In both cases, what is evident is a reluctance to think outside one's own cultural environment — a lack of imagination which, as globalisation brings vastly different cultures ever closer together, begins to look more and more wilfully (and dangerously) thick-headed.

That some of the rural supporters of Pauline Hanson have some legitimate complaints cannot be doubted, but one would hope that unless they can learn to voice those complaints with some acknowledgment of the plight of other disenfranchised groups, they will continue to remain marginalised in a society whose defining characteristics have always included a marked degree of cultural elasticity.

David Rutledge,
Bronte, Sydney, Australia

AUSTRALIAN politics are in a sorry state at present. On the one hand we have the two long-established parties that put ideology and economic theory before the well-being of the people, and on the other hand we have a new party which has become the repository of every kind of protest in the country, including tolls on highways, TV violence, cheap pork imports, corrupt politicians and street signs in Japanese, and which encourages the basest of human instincts such as greed, envy, selfishness and racism. It has nothing to do with governing the country.

Pauline Hanson stimulates fear and resentment in the electorate by quoting incorrect figures, yet her supporters see this as an endearing characteristic: to correct her is to be pedantic. They claim that the party's statements are not racist; instead they have redefined the term to mean hatred, not discrimination. Even more alarming are her party's claims of conspiracies in government to falsify census figures, economic data and government statistics, and of leftwing plots to manipulate protesters into supporting their alarmist stance.

Ms Hanson encourages greed by protecting existing — and promising more — privileges, subsidies, grants and allowances to certain groups such as farmers, politicians and football clubs, through cuts to funding to Aborigines, single mothers and the arts, and all in the name of equality.

While there may be a great deal wrong with the major parties, it is surely foolish to give powers to such an ill-informed, intolerant and heartless individual and her party.

M Ferrie,
Oatley, NSW, Australia

Truth has value in new South Africa

AS A South African trade unionist, my experiences of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are quite different to those of your editorial writer (August 9). I am relieved to know at last what happened to my friend and fellow activist Stanza Bopape, who was said by police to have escaped from custody in June 1988. Hearings revealed that he had a heart attack as a result of electric shock torture, and that his body was thrown by police into a crocodile-infested river.

Knowing too that the security forces were responsible for the May 1987 bombing of the headquarters of the trade union movement Cosatu, where I worked, vindicates the argument at the time that such attacks were state-sponsored terrorism, and not the actions of rogue elements.

The knowledge now that youths were trained by the South African Defence Force to act as hit squads against trade unionists and political activists in Natal at a time when the world press described the carnage as "black-on-black violence" helps remind people like myself that we were not mad or paranoid in arguing the existence of a state-trained third force.

The real process of reconciliation lies with the TRC's compensation and victim-support strategies and ultimately with the capacity of the government to implement the TRC's final recommendations. The TRC clearly has not been flawless and may not be an appropriate model for Northern Ireland. But to call it "Archbishop Tutu's adventures in pursuit of the truth" is insulting to all of us who are trying to make a difference in the new South Africa.

Jane Barrett,
London

How to get your message across

KEN CAMPBELL is campaigning for Tok Pisin of Papua Niugini and west Pacific as the ideal international language because it "takes but two days to learn", having so little grammar (Wontok answer to global incomprehension, August 2).

There are some practical drawbacks to this idea, since pijin is too short on vocabulary and concepts compared with the international advantages of English. What it can really offer the world is an international English spelling for the new millennium, if only English reformed its spelling according to Tok Pisin guidelines of economy and simplicity.

Tok Pisin can be read imediatly within five minuts of knowing the basic principls, and the ritn languaj can be used to lern the spoken languaj and vice versa. Being of 85 per cent English origin it shows how English words can be respelled for practical use — and indeed are gradually being respelled in areas of popular culture, eg, pop groups such as Imajin.

The numerus local dialects are no insuperabl barrier to comunicasen, becaus comprehensiv and simpl vowels cover a variety of shades of phoneme eg, arurut for arrowroot (cf English banana).

The following piece of Tok Pisin is only slightly adapted in vocabulary: "Cofi rehabilitesen awenes kampan. Kofi rust — Samtings tu du. — Klin kofi gaden gut — Shading — Kut and prune — Draining. Sapos yu mak dis things, yu wil stop the sik cofi rust and yur cofi plants wil kari moa beris."

The current British kampan against gobildiguk could take on bord spellings in English languaj that would be comparabl to these exampls of Tok Pisin simplifications — Dipartmen Praimeri Indastri, Nesenel Brotkasting Komisi, Asosiet Pres, Komyuniti Projek, Provinsal Seketeri, Nius Sevis Waia, Gavman. English spelling is, in Tok Pisin vocabulary, bagarup. We could well re-import the expression but remove the occasion for it.

Valerie Yule,
Mount Waverley, Victoria, Australia

KEN CAMPBELL had better watch his back if he ever travels to Melanesia. My wantok are particularly partial to arrogant white fellas with hairy eyebrows, and they would certainly be inviting as many clans as possible to share in their dinner plans!

Susi Newborn,
Grey Lynn, Auckland, New Zealand

Why is it vital to be pretty, Polly?

AS BOTH a faithful feminist and a committed Christian I take exception to Polly Toynbee's flippant remarks about the boringness of being either . . . or both (When feminists take to playing the fool, July 12).

I'm sure she was trying to amuse, but being so often made fun of for both these beliefs by ignorant people, usually men, her piece really was the last straw. Having lived in the male-dominated, Islamic culture of Pakistan for the past 10 months, I am afraid I am losing my sense of humour about these topics as all around me I witness the gross intolerance towards both these concepts, especially the former.

As an older woman volunteer, I am fortunate compared with my younger colleagues, as I am given a certain amount of respect which seems to be automatic for a grey-haired woman, and, with a bit of effort, I can worship regularly in my church. This is not necessarily the case for all Christians in Pakistan.

Also, it is not boring to be a feminist if one is a young Pakistani woman — it is essential. And why is being "sexy" so vital? As liberated women we have many other qualities to offer and cultivate.

Ann Thorp,
Karachi, Pakistan

Briefly

JAMES MEEK'S account of the experiences of potential Russian tourists at the British Embassy in Moscow (Russian rage at UK visas, August 2) reminded me of a scene I witnessed at the British Consulate in Geneva while I was waiting to renew my passport.

A young man had had his visa application rejected: "No, we don't give reasons, but you can reapply." This was in the afternoon. "No, not now. We only do visas in the morning." The poor fellow lived in Lausanne. "Well, that's not my problem, is it?" All this in a really objectionable manner which proclaimed "We are the masters".

I filled in a "satisfaction" questionnaire, expressing my disgust at this attitude and fled the consulate. Can this be what is known as "flying the flag"?

Annette Koreneff,
Ferney-Voltair, France

THE President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akayev, was at no time one of the "former Communist party henchmen of the Soviet era" (Central Asian nations unite by marriage, July 26). The closest he came to that bad eminence was a brief stint as head of the science division of the Kyrgyz Central Committee — hardly a front-rank power position — before becoming the president of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences. Akayev was, moreover, a close ally of Andrei Sakharov, who would hardly have embraced a "henchman" of the "rough-arm" variety.

David C Speedie,
Upper Montclair, New Jersey, USA

JAMES LEWIS reports on "students paid to eat pesticides" (July 30). In my long experience of college food, it is more a case of students *pay* to eat pesticides.

Dr Matt Jones,
London

SO the American people are prepared to listen seriously to a person who for two-and-a-half years neglected to wash out a rather unpleasant stain on a dress (Clinton's week of living dangerously, August 9)?

Laura Stuart,
Nottingham

NOW that India and Pakistan have formally joined the nuclear weapons club in the time-honoured way, surely they should both be suitably rewarded with permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council. If there are any other entry qualifications beyond a nod of approval from Henry Kissinger, I'd love to know what they are.

Tim Groves,
Kyoto, Japan



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Taliban's advance alarms neighbours

Richard Galpin

ISLAMIC Taliban forces were this week reported to have advanced towards the strategic town of Hairaton, near the border with Uzbekistan, triggering alarm among neighbouring Central Asian states.

Tajikistan, supported by Russian troops, began reinforcing its border to prevent the fighting spilling over from northern Afghanistan. Tajikistan's government has been put on alert while Tajik and Russian troops are reportedly taking "urgent measures".

Russia has retained 25,000 troops on station in Tajikistan, permanently guarding the border, and patrols have been strengthened.

In some areas the Taliban have advanced to within 20-40km of the Tajik border, the Tajik deputy prime minister, Abdurakhmon Azimov, said on Monday.

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan — which border Afghanistan — as well as nearby Kyrgyzstan, have secular governments wary of the fundamentalist Taliban. They have been sympathetic to the now weakened opposition in the north of Afghanistan.

Russia also fears the entrenchment of a radical Islamic state in Afghanistan, which could bring an influx of refugees and arms into the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. It has belatedly begun funding its former Afghan enemies in the hope of defeating the fundamentalist advance.

The Taliban's rapidly developing offensive, which began with the defection of opposition warlords, has abruptly ended the stalemate in Afghanistan's [illegible] war.



Two years after capturing the country's devastated capital, Kabul, Taliban militia were this week consolidating their hold over the headquarters of the opposition alliance in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Following a massed assault last weekend and two days of fighting in the streets, independent sources reported that Taliban forces controlled the entire city.

Confirmation of the city's fall came from the opposition, who admitted early on Monday that Taliban troops were in full control of the city.

However, an opposition spokesman vowed that their troops would "re-group and counter attack". The forces of the opposition Shi'ite party Hizbe Wahadat are among the strongest in the area and are reported to be around the south of the city.

Meanwhile Taliban troops have pressed forward their advantage, heading north into the remaining opposition territory.

It is estimated that this devastating offensive, which began in July, has extended the Taliban's control to at least three-quarters of the country. The opposition have been left with just a handful of provinces in the northeastern and central regions, controlled by the different parties of the alliance, which will be isolated and vulnerable to further attack from the Taliban.

Even the Panjshir valley, controlled by the opposition commander, Ahmed Shah Massoud, and believed to be almost impregnable, could be blockaded if the Taliban's advance continues.

But it is unclear what the Taliban [illegible] push on as far as possible, or slow down the offensive and consolidate before finding themselves overstretched.

Last year in similar attacks on Mazar-i-Sharif, the Taliban marched into the city only to be forced out again within days as they had failed to ensure the loyalty of the heavily armed factions still in the area.

The Taliban's series of military victories in the north are also causing mounting concern in neighbouring Islamic countries.

Iran, which is widely believed to provide political and military support to the opposition this week evacuated nine diplomats who had been based in the opposition stronghold of Bamian, in central Afghanistan. It follows the disappearance of 11 Iranian diplomats from Mazar-i-Sharif last weekend.

The writer Arundhati Roy leads a demonstration against India's nuclear tests in New Delhi last week on the 53rd anniversary of the US A-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki PHOTO: RAVEENDRAN

China and Korea on new flood alert as rivers rise

Guardian Reporters

[illegible] South Korea braced themselves this week for a fresh surge of flooding as heavy rain sent waters rising to record levels on the swollen Yangtze river and hampered the search for survivors of the deluge in and around Seoul, which has left 234 people dead and 91 people missing.

Residents of China's central Hubei province and troops scrambled to shore up flood defences after the prime minister, Zhu Rongji, warned that more dikes were in danger of bursting.

"The flood situation is very serious on the Yangtze river," China Daily quoted Mr Zhu as saying during a tour of the Hubei city of Jingzhou. "There is a high possibility of cave-ins and crumbling along the main river dikes because of the long soaking period."

Mr Zhu's words amounted to the strongest government warning yet about the floods, which have [illegible] people and knocked agriculture and industry at a time of flagging economic growth.

The last official estimate, several weeks ago, said the floods had caused $5 billion worth of damage and had cut the summer grain harvest by 11 million tonnes.

The disaster has left more than 121,000 South Koreans homeless. They are sheltering in schools, churches and town halls, the national disaster prevention headquarters said. About 115,000 acres of farmland — mostly rice fields — have been flooded while 36 roads and three railway lines remain closed. More than 44,000 homes and buildings have been damaged, along with 779 roads and bridges.

In Bangladesh, more than 300 people have been killed and millions marooned by heavy rain. Flood water has started receding, but monitors say it will take months for the land to dry out fully.

Poles refuse to remove cross at Auschwitz

Neil Bowdler in Warsaw

THE Polish Catholic Church last week rejected a call from the Israeli government for the removal of a 9m-high wooden cross and smaller ones from outside the former Auschwitz concentration camp.

Responding to a request from the office of the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, the Polish primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, defiantly said the cross was staying put, adding: "This land is Polish and attempts by others to impose their will is seen as impinging on the sovereignty of the country."

The towering cross was originally used during the 1979 papal mass. It was brought to its present site outside the perimeter of the former camp in the late 1980s as a Carmelite order of nuns tried to avoid eviction from the area under pressure from the international Jewish community. The nuns lost their battle but the cross remained, and when, earlier this year, a Polish government minister indicated it, too, might go in deference to Jewish sensitivities, Catholics leapt to its defence.

Daily prayers were organised under the auspices of a Committee for the Defence of the Cross; political support was lent by the Solidarity veteran and former president Lech Walesa; and Cardinal Glemp waded in, saying the cross stood for Polish national suffering everywhere, "be it in the Gdansk shipyard, Warsaw or Auschwitz".

A 42-day hunger strike was held under the cross by Kazimierz Switon, an eccentric Catholic extremist known for his anti-Semitic views.

When Mr Switon was persuaded by Church figures to end his fast, he and his supporters erected about 50 crosses on the site. More have gone up subsequently, as Mr Switon voiced his hope to see 152 crosses, one each for a group of Poles shot at on the site by Nazis during the second world war.

Condemnation from Jewry has been universal, spoiling improving Jewish-Polish relations. Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial officials have called the field of crosses "a provocative act" by extremists and said the crosses contravene an international accord on the removal of all religious and political symbols from the Auschwitz-Birkenau site.

An estimated 1.5 million people died in the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps, most of them Jews. Catholic victims are believed to number approximately 75,000.

The Week

PORTUGAL and Indonesia agreed to discuss autonomy for East Timor. Indonesia also announced the withdrawal of troops in the Sumatran province of Aceh and apologised for human rights abuses by soldiers.
Le Monde, page 13

BURMA'S military regime detained 18 foreigners for distributing pamphlets that it claimed were aimed at inciting unrest. The 10th anniversary of an uprising against the military, which fell a day before the detentions, passed without incident.
Comment, page 12

JULY was the hottest month across the world since records began, according to US Vice-President Al Gore. He blamed global warming and said a spate of disasters would follow if the problem wasn't tackled.

AT least 130 people were killed in series of guerrilla attacks in Colombia, intended as a show of strength before peace talks planned by the country's new president, Andres Pastrana.

THE tiny Caribbean islands of St Kitts and Nevis remained one nation after a vote on secession. Nearly 62 per cent of Nevisians voted for independence but this fell short of the necessary two-thirds majority.

FEARS [illegible] spate of letter bombs marks the beginning of a terrorist campaign after bomb scares in Rome, Como and Bologna.

JAPANESE police are investigating a suspected copycat poisoning, after 10 people suffered palpitations, temporary blindness and nausea after drinking green tea. Four people died last month after eating curry laced with arsenic.

MORE THAN 150 people have been killed near Caombo in northeastern Angola, in the second massacre in recent weeks.

ITALY and Tunisia signed an agreement to repatriate the hundreds of illegal Tunisian immigrants detained in Italy.

Bulgaria's last dictator

OBITUARY
Todor Zhivkov

TODOR Zhivkov, who has died aged 86, was the former Soviet bloc's longest-serving communist dictator. He ruled Bulgaria for 35 years as if it was his country estate, but fell foul of the Gorbachev revolution in 1989, was ousted and spent his final years under house arrest.

Within a year of Stalin's death, Zhivkov had become head of the Bulgarian Communist party and for 35 years presided over a regime that combined docility towards the Kremlin with nepotism, patronage and corruption on a staggering scale at home.

Born into a peasant family in Pravets, a mountain village outside Sofia, he was working as a printer in the Bulgarian capital in the 1930s when he embarked on a lifetime in Balkan communist politics. A leading partisan fighter against the Nazis in Bulgaria in the second world war, he played a role in the communist takeover of his country in September 1944, and within six years of the end of the war, at the age of 40, he gained a seat on the party politburo.

After 1954, when he was made party leader, he spent his early years in power purging his internal rivals — by 1961 succeeding in concentrating power in his hands, to pave the way for a quarter century of absolute rule during which he, his family, and his cronies amassed considerable wealth. Zhivkov's Bulgaria became notorious for its ruth[illegible] cloak-and-dagger activities and for its willingness to operate as a proxy for the KGB abroad.

By the time Zhivkov was unseated, he had saddled Bulgaria with a $10 billion foreign debt that the country could not repay.

By the late 1980s, Zhivkov was having to cope with the strange new breeze blowing across the Black Sea from Mikhail Gorbachev's Soviet Union. He sought to weather the storm by proclaiming that Gorbachev was merely aping Bulgaria where perestroika had long been set in train.

But younger rivals inside the party were plotting to unseat him. In the 1970s and 1980s Zhivkov embarked on a systematic campaign of harassment of the country's sizeable Turkish minority. By early 1989, a combination of persecution, fury and fear produced what was then the biggest post-war mass movement of people: more than 300,000 Bulgarian Turks fled the country.

At a politburo meeting in Sofia in November 1989, Petar Mladenov, the former foreign minister, mustered enough votes to depose him, although the country remained largely in the hands of the younger apparatchiks who had served him until 1996, when a wave of demonstrations and strikes brought the reformist Petar Stoyanov to power.

Fifteen months after he was removed from power, Zhivkov was tried for embezzlement. He was not put in prison, however, merely ordered to remain under house arrest.

Ian Traynor

Todor Zhivkov, dictator, born September 7, 1911; died August 5, 1998



Residents of an Athens suburb fight a fire threatening to engulf a forested area PHOTO: LEFTERIS PITARAKIS

Athens on alert after fierce fires

Helena Smith in Athens

THE Greek government last week declared a state of emergency in the greater Athens area and the Peloponnese as forest fires tore through tourist areas.

Amid scenes of panic as flames engulfed homes on Mount Pendeli near the capital, the entire state machinery, including soldiers and doctors, was put on alert.

As the blaze swept down Mount Pendeli, killing an elderly resident, more than 1,000 locals crammed their possessions into cars and fled. Others who refused to leave were seen frantically trying to put out [illegible] with blankets and hoses.

The public order minister, George Romaios, insisted that the fires were the work of arsonists bent on clearing land for property developers. He said police had arrested five men armed with firecrackers and had found other equipment, such as timebombs and cauldrons, in remote forest areas.

The fires, the worst in living memory, have left a trail of destruction. Much of Pendeli, one of Athens' last wooded areas, and vast swathes of the Peloponnese now resemble a war zone.

In the north and south of the Peloponnese, wind whipped fires through the rolling countryside. Hundreds of people fled villages around the peninsula's port cities of Patras and Kalamata.

Television showed dramatic footage of old men, women and children diving for cover as flames the size of barns descended upon them. Two men died of heart attacks as they watched their herds being burned alive.

Ancient Olympia, the 2,000-year-old site of the first Olympic Games, was only narrowly saved. Hundreds of locals rushed to the monument, seen as second only to the Acropolis, to fight the blaze.

● In Cyprus 48 people, mainly elderly, died as a scorching heatwave gripped the Mediterranean island over the weekend.

Contact group puts forward Kosovo plan

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE six-country contact group on Kosovo — which includes the United States and Russia — has drawn up new proposals for the political future of the war-torn Serbian province.

The proposals emerged this week as it became clear that Nato is unlikely to use military force to end the worsening humanitarian crisis.

Plans for a constitutional settlement "would give the people of Kosovo control of their own internal affairs, control over their own security and real autonomy", said the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. He said there were indications that Belgrade, seat of the Serbian government, was willing to discuss the plans. "We are making it plain to both sides that this is not a war that either side can win," he said.

As they gained control of more territory from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), Serbian forces were reported to be engaged in a scorched-earth policy.

The Serbian offensive has forced tens of thousands of people from their homes. The United Nations estimates that there are 200,000 displaced people, but charities say the figure is higher.

The Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, has said he is ready to talk with the Kosovans on autonomy, but the feuding Albanian politicians have been unable to agree the make-up of their negotiating team.

Comment, page 12

Opposition stirs row over Kohl's chosen successor

Denis Staunton in Berlin

CHANCELLOR Helmut Kohl returned from his summer holiday this week to a heated debate about whether Germans are willing to accept a chancellor in a wheelchair. Mr Kohl insisted on Monday that his chosen successor remains Wolfgang Schäuble, who has used a wheelchair since an assassination attempt in 1990.

"I stressed a few days ago that he is a boon for the Christian Democrats [CDU] and that I want him to succeed me," the chancellor said.

Doubts about Mr Schäuble's future emerged last week when his wife, Ingeborg, told the weekly news magazine Stern that she did not want her husband to be chancellor.

Commentators assumed that she was speaking on behalf of her husband, and the opposition Social Democrats (SPD) immediately began a succession debate within the CDU. Describing Mr Schäuble as "very conservative", the SPD candidate for chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, said he would prefer to share power in a grand coalition with the defence minister, Volker Rühe.

Mr Rühe makes no secret of his ambition to become chancellor and has long been regarded as Mr Schäuble's most formidable rival for the post. But he said on Monday that he backed Mr Kohl's chosen successor, although his remarks in the mass circulation Bild am Sonntag were accompanied by photographs of him in dynamic poses on a beach.

"Schäuble is clearly the number two behind Helmut Kohl. I think that's good because we have a long-standing friendship. There will be no personal disagreements between me and Schäuble. Quite the reverse: we will work so closely together in the future that it will make many people wonder," he said.

Mr Schäuble, who is respected as one of the sharpest intellects in German politics, returned to active politics a few months after the assassination attempt to become the CDU parliamentary leader. He enjoys good relations with opposition politicians and, unlike Mr Kohl, has not ruled out working with the SPD in a grand coalition.

Privately, some senior Christian Democrats have expressed doubts about whether Mr Schäuble's disability would inhibit him from becoming chancellor. Bavaria's conservative prime minister, Edmund Stoiber, was accused of tastelessness when he questioned if the public would accept a chancellor in a wheelchair.

Meanwhile Mr Kohl seemed poised for a dramatic comeback in next month's federal election as an opinion poll showed the CDU closing on the opposition SPD.

As SPD leaders warned that victory could yet slip from their grasp, some activists blamed the party's slick, New Labour-style campaign for their falling support.



Watched by the sultan, Prince Billah kisses the queen's hand

From Oxford to sultan's throne

Nick Cumming-Bruce

TO THE boom of cannon and the drone of Muslim prayers, a snooker-crazy 24-year-old former Oxford student with a passion for Bon Jovi became heir this week to the throne of Brunei — the wealthy oil sultanate currently deep in a royal financial scandal.

At a 75-minute investiture ceremony in the 1,788-room royal palace, Prince al-Muhtadee Billah Bolkiah received a jewel-encrusted dagger, putting him in line to become the 30th ruler of one of the world's last absolute monarchies.

Until last year Prince Billah was in Oxford enjoying the carefree life of a student and a sometime competitor at international snooker meets under the assumed commoner's name of Omar Hassan.

On Monday, he was formally designated as successor before 4,000 royal relatives and dignitaries, in the capital of Bandar Seri Begawan. After a 10-minute prayer, Prince Billah kissed the hands of his father, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, aged 52, his mother, and his father's second wife.

Conspicuous by his absence was Prince Billah's uncle Jefri. The sultan has ordered an investigation into the murky financial transactions by which his youngest brother is rumoured to have lost $16 billion.

Rebels close in on Africa's trigger

Tutsis are making gains in Laurent Kabila's Congo, but its neighbours could hold the decisive card, writes **Patrick Smith**

AFRICA is shaped like a revolver, wrote the Martinican writer Franz Fanon, and Congo is the trigger. Since August 1 the battle for Africa's trigger has resumed in earnest.

As rebel forces dominated by the Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsi) quickly push westwards from eastern Congo (formerly Zaire), a new political coalition ostensibly led by a former official of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), Arthur Z'Ahidi Ngoma, is bidding strongly to get its fingers on the trigger.

Within days last week this rebel coalition seized the two key cities in eastern Congo — Goma and Bukavu — and has been pushing to gain control of Kisangani and its airport. If successful, the rebel alliance will have effectively cut off the government's supply lines to the east.

The rebel commander, Sylvain Mbelenge, said that his forces had captured the oil town of Muanda, on the west coast, and other units were now targeting the southern town of Kalemie, gateway to the copper-rich Shaba province.

"Our forces are moving in virtually every direction. We have moved close to the port of Matadi. We took the port of Muanda," he said.

Kabila: surrounded by mistrust

Angolan troops were stationed earlier in Matadi to keep watch on the critical Congo-Angolan corridor with the aim of stopping supplies for Unita rebels, led by Jonas Savimbi, passing through Congo. If the Angolans completely lost confidence in President Laurent Kabila and joined the Ugandans and Rwandans in the rebellion against him, this could decisively alter the balance of power.

Much of the rebels' success must be attributed to their regional backers, despite a public warning from Washington to Congo's neighbouring states not to meddle in the imbroglio. Around the huge state are grouped a series of interlocking power alliances: one axis stretches through oil-rich Angola to Africa's southwestern tip; another runs through the fertile plains of Uganda to the Horn of Africa.

Eighteen months ago, the beneficiary of those alliances was Mr Kabila, then a corpulent, shaven-headed guerrilla leader and gold smuggler who had styled himself as a long-time radical opponent of the brutal, corrupt dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko.

Swept to power in May 1997 as leader of a makeshift coalition, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, Mr Kabila rode a military alliance powered by the guerrilla fighting expertise of the Rwandan and Ugandan armies, and the airlift and heavy artillery capacity of the Angolan army. And in the background stood other regional powers, such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia in the south, together with Eritrea and Ethiopia in the north, who were quietly celebrating the ousting of President Mobutu.

Unhappily for Mr Kabila, most of the states in that regional alliance have concluded that he is not going to deliver the political stability and economic development they want to see from the mineral-rich Congo. And most seriously, his key military backers in Rwanda, Uganda and now, it seems, Angola, believe that he has not returned the favour by securing Congo's borders to cut off supply routes to rebel forces such as the Lord's Resistance Army and the interahamwe armed Hutu militia in the east, and Unita rebels in Angola.

Rwanda, whose northwest province has experienced a number of massacres reportedly by interahamwe forces, was the first to lose patience with Mr Kabila and started questioning his security strategy early in the year. At the end of July he snapped, and expelled all Rwandan troops from Congo. Within days the Banyamulenge rebellion started in the east and Mr Ngoma — who is not Banyamulenge — emerged as its leader.

Mr Ngoma makes much of his independent political credentials. He launched his Forces of Future party in Kinshasa last year, but Mr Kabila immediately banned it. He was arrested at its first official meeting and was given a one-year suspended jail sentence. Mr Ngoma then left for France. Now he insists he is not a Rwandan or Banyamulenge front man. "This is not a Banyamulenge struggle. It is a struggle of all Congolese." While he speaks passionately against the oppression and corruption of the Kabila regime, few are convinced by his protestations of independence.

Mr Kabila blamed General Paul Kagame's government in Rwanda for the Ngoma rebellion. "We say explicitly that Rwanda is attacking us," his information minister, Didier Mumenge, told journalists. Mr Kabila has also instructed his United Nations ambassador, Andre Kapanga, to ask the UN Security Council to condemn "the invasion" by Rwanda.

This replays the history of Mr Kabila's own military campaign, backed by Rwanda and Uganda, against the Mobutu regime, which tried, with some backing from France, to get the UN to condemn a "foreign invasion" from the east. Mr Kabila looks even less likely to win sympathy from the Security Council than his old adversary.

Mr Kabila's best chance seems to be to convince other leaders that they should help him shore up his regime, but co-operation appeared unlikely after last weekend's regional summit in Zimbabwe broke up in mutual recrimination.

He got a small boost from South Africa's foreign minister, Alfred Nzo, who flew to Lubumbashi last week to see him. Asked if Pretoria still backed the embattled Mr Kabila, Mr Nzo said: "Yes, of course we do. We support the Democratic Republic of Congo, which at the moment is headed by Kabila."

As the fighting continues this week, Mr Kabila will need all his powers of persuasion to convince his fellow regional players that his regime is still worth propping up.

Patrick Smith is editor of Africa Confidential

Ashrawi quits Arafat's cabinet over corruption in the ranks

Julian Borger in Jerusalem

HANAN ASHRAWI, one of the best known campaigners for Palestinian rights, has resigned from Yasser Arafat's cabinet, accusing the veteran Arab leader of failing to curb corruption in his administration.

Ms Ashrawi announced her resignation a day after Mr Arafat announced a long-awaited cabinet reshuffle last week. Despite widespread allegations of graft and mismanagement levelled by the Palestinian parliament, only one minister was sacked and the cabinet was expanded, with the addition of 10 posts.

The outgoing agriculture minister, Abdel Jawwad Saleh, also resigned rather than accept a ministry without portfolio. He called the new cabinet a "tragedy".

Ms Ashrawi, an English literature professor who was the chief Palestinian spokeswoman during the ground-breaking Madrid peace conference in 1991, had been switched from higher education to the tourism ministry, but she refused to stay on.

"I believe that comprehensive reform was not addressed in this new government formulation," she said. "I believe when people called for change they didn't ask for additions. They asked for change in the . . . status quo, but what we see now is maintaining what existed [and] adding people to it."

When Mr Arafat announced details of the reshuffle, he said his ministers were now making "fewer mistakes". But members of the parliament, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), jeered, and Mr Saleh cried out: "I'm convinced that there's no cabinet, and corruption has become an institution in the Palestinian system."

There are 26 ministerial posts in Mr Arafat's new cabinet, although six will be without portfolio, with no ministries to oversee. Ms Ashrawi plans to continue to work as a deputy in the PLC.

Ghassan Khatib, director of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre, said the new cabinet reflected "the growing isolation" of the Palestinian Authority and the ruling Fatah party "within both Palestinian society and the political spectrum".

Results of an opinion poll published last week showed that 56 per cent of the Palestinians questioned believed Palestinian political institutions were corrupt, and described the cabinet and government offices as being the most crooked.

An independent audit carried out last year, followed by a PLC report earlier this year, detailed abuse of public funds by ministers who ran up bills of millions of dollars on hotel rooms, restaurants and travel.

Much of the criticism focused on Nabil Sha'ath, one of the main negotiators in talks with the Israelis, but he kept his job at the key planning ministry — the channel for most of the $320 million in aid which the Palestinian territories receive each year. Mr Sha'ath has denied any wrongdoing, and challenged his accusers to produce hard evidence.

Democrat ties don't bind black Americans

WASHINGTON DIARY
Gary Younge

AT LAST black Democrats and the conservative Supreme Court judge, Clarence Thomas, have found common cause. They do not know it yet but there is an uneasy confluence of interests between the two groups who have sat scowling at each other from either end of the political spectrum.

At first sight this looks unlikely. The overwhelming majority of black voters — 82 per cent according to a recent poll — are Democrats. Nothing odd in that. African-Americans are far more likely to be unemployed or poorly paid than whites. They have also been the most ardent supporters of affirmative action. Democrats have a record of raising the minimum wage, of federal intervention to relieve unemployment, and are advocates of the need to redress the racial imbalance in the workplace. Blacks and Democrats are natural allies.

But this, many African-Americans believe, has become something of an abusive relationship — like a cavalier lover who knows his partner won't leave him however badly he behaves. The Democratic party, in short, has been taking advantage.

"Do not let any political party feel they are always sure of your vote. Nor let any party feel they can never get your vote," said George Cable, an African-American author who fought for the Confederacy during the American Civil War.

So far many black Americans have not heeded his advice. When the black congressional caucus expressed their opposition to Clinton's welfare reform plans — which would have inflicted a disproportionate hardship on African-American women — the president listened carefully and then voted for them anyway. However, when it came to the presidential election they still stood by him.

The issue for the Democratic party machine in most areas is not whether they can get black American voters to back them, but whether they can get African-Americans to get out and vote at all. "They turn up on Martin Luther King day, eat some burritos and then show their faces at our churches just before election day without even staying for the service," said one black Republican in Denver.

In crude electoral terms the Democrats are probably right. With such a loyal group of voters there is little to be gained electorally from making big concessions to African-Americans. It is the floating voters among the white middle class who determine the outcome of elections, not poor blacks. And besides, if blacks are disappointed by the Democrats, where can they go?

This is where Supreme Court Justice Thomas comes in. At a recent conference of the National Bar Association, the largest organisation of black lawyers in the United States, Thomas faced harsh criticism and a walk-out as he delivered a defiant address, saying he was not prepared to "follow the prescription assigned to blacks", and that those who expect him to follow a certain ideological course because of his race were denying his "humanity" and urging him to become "an intellectual slave".



Common cause . . . A rally in support of Clarence Thomas's appointment to the Supreme Court in 1991 PHOTOGRAPH: LUKE FRAZZA

Tough talking indeed, but there is no love lost between Thomas and the vast majority of black Americans. Accusations that he sexually harassed his black aide, Anita Hill, which almost derailed his appointment by George Bush seven years ago, are yet to be disproved to their satisfaction.

Since he took his seat on the nation's highest judicial authority he has ruled against many of the issues African-Americans hold dear, such as minority voting rights and affirmative action. Moreover, as only the second black judge to take a seat on the Supreme Court, he stepped into the historically imposing shoes of the late Thurgood Marshall, who led the legal battle against "separate but equal" segregation and for affirmative action in the 1940s and '50s.

"Clarence Thomas ascended to the Supreme Court precisely because of the civil rights struggles of his ancestors. Then, as soon as he got to the high court, he turned his back on them," said one lawyer who walked out on Thomas's speech.

But while their sense of frustration is understandable, their feelings of betrayal are not. Whatever Thomas is, he is not a heretic. He is, and always has been, a genuine conservative. In this regard many of his views, particularly on such social issues as homosexuality and religious teaching in schools, are in line with many black Americans. A 1996 poll showed that 44 per cent of black Americans had an unfavourable view of him. But 32 per cent — not an insignificant number — regarded him positively.

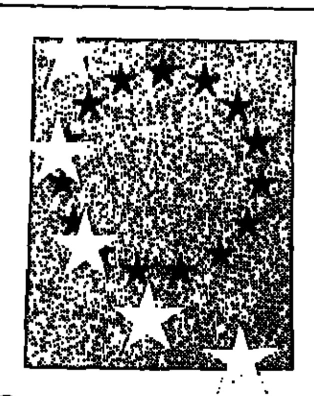
As economic success filters through to one layer of the black community, bolstering a growing and prosperous black middle class, a section of the black community is finding its economic interests aligned to low-tax, no-government Republicans rather than interventionist Democrats.

There are indications that this is already happening. In the electoral battles for top offices in Florida, Missouri, South Carolina and Maryland, Democrats are finding that the once-solid black vote is softening. In each state the reasons are different, ranging from perceived racial snubs by a white Democratic party machine in Florida to concerted Republican overtures in South Carolina.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Florida, where the black speaker-designate, Willie Logan, was replaced by Anne Mackenzie, who is white. To protest at his removal, local black leaders advised blacks voting in a special Senate election to withhold their support for the Democrat candidate, Steve Geller, who had supported Logan's removal. Geller still won, but he lost in five of the 12 constituencies where blacks made up more than [illegible] per cent of the voters. In another constituency he won by just one vote.

None of this adds up to a black exodus to the Republicans. But it does give the Democrats something to worry about. It shows a limit to the black electorate's patience and a signal that the support of African-Americans is not unconditional. This gives black Democrats on Capitol Hill a trump card and must have put the smile back on the face of the besieged and gloomy Justice Thomas.

Britain could be too different to fit in



Europe this week
Martin Walker

AS IF to welcome Peter Mandelson into his new Cabinet job as Britain's Secretary for Trade and Industry, the pound obligingly fell below 2.90 German marks last week. British exports that were overpriced at a sterling rate of DM3.10, which has battered manufacturing industry into something close to recession, are starting to inch their way back into competition.

The British economy is slowing down. The economy of euroland, home to the 11 nations in the new single currency zone, is speeding up. Could we therefore be approaching that happy moment of convergence, on which the British government has now pinned its policies towards the euro?

There is a great deal of blithe optimism about, in Brussels at the European Commission and in the Council of Ministers, in Frankfurt at the new European Central Bank, and in Whitehall. The latest EU-commissioned opinion poll of Britain shows that those for and those against are now so finely balanced that the "no" margin is within the poll's statistical margin of error.

But what is not being addressed is the small print underpinning what the British government actually said last year, when it declared that it would join the euro when certain criteria are met. This was the statement which has inspired the EC president, Jacques Santer, to assert that British entry "is not a question of if, only of when".

But the small print is crucial. "Sustainable and durable convergence" is the core of Gordon Brown's criteria for entry. The question the British Chancellor of the Exchequer posed was a simple one: "Are business cycles and economic structures compatible so that we and others could live comfortably with euro interest rates on a permanent basis?"

Put like that, the only answer is no. The business cycles are wildly out of sync. British three-month money-market interest rates, at 7.63 per cent, are more than twice as high as those in Germany (3.53 per cent) and France (3.5 per cent).

As, indeed, are the economic structures. According to the latest survey of foreign investment by the EU's statistical body, Eurostat, the pattern of high mutual investment by the United States and Britain is not only wholly atypical of the rest of the union, but the British and American economies are intensifying their embrace. The US invested almost twice as much in Britain last year as it did in all the other EU countries combined. Britain, by far Europe's biggest investor in the US, invested as much across the Atlantic as it did in Europe.

Market forces are driving the British economy closer to the US, despite government appeals for Britain to prepare for the coming of the euro. As a result, Britain is far more integrated into the global economy than the rest of Europe, according to Eurostat's latest annual investment surveys.

Britain remains the odd man out of European economies. It is by far the biggest foreign investor and the biggest European recipient of foreign investment, and of all the EU countries, Britain trades least with its European partners. The difference in investment patterns between France and Britain, the two biggest recipients of foreign investment, is extraordinary. Britain last year received a total of $34 billion in foreign investment, of which just over a quarter came from other EU countries. France received £23 billion in foreign investment, more than two-thirds of which came from other EU members.

The figures are likely to be seized on by conservative campaigners who want Britain to join the North American Free Trade Agreement, as recommended by the Speaker of the US Congress, Newt Gingrich. Although the EU trade commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, has warned Conservatives in Britain that joining Nafta is not legally compatible with remaining inside the EU, the idea is still championed by eurosceptics as a serious alternative to Europe.

THE NEW investment statistics are matched by Eurostat's trade figures, which show Britain as the EU member which trades least with its partners. Where the average EU member does two-thirds of its total trade with EU countries, Britain's combined exports and imports with the EU account for only 54 per cent of its trade. The inescapable conclusion is that Britain is not yet a full integrated European economy, which will make membership of the euro very tricky.

But we are still three years away from the moment of decision, three years in which Brown's Budgets and Mandelson's trade and industry policies can bring about the convergence. What are the prospects that these can do the trick?

At the margins, pretty good, if their nerve holds. Tax policies could change the unique way that Britain finances its home-buying through variable-rate mortgages, which makes the electorate so edgy about interest rates. Tax increases could also help nudge down the exchange rate to a more manageable level for exporters.

But the targets are daunting. To halve British interest rates, and also cut inflation by half to match the German rate, and massage down the exchange rate — all the while avoiding the kind of slump that could lose the next election — would require something close to a medium-term miracle.

If Britain finds it difficult to achieve convergence with Europe why can't its partners come more than half way to met Britain? All this investment of quality time by the prime minister could be enough to persuade his EU colleagues to raise both their inflation and interest rates to suit the UK.

Maybe. But it is no longer up to Tony Blair's political chums in Europe. They are no longer in charge of their money supply, which means that they cannot change their interest rates even if they wanted to. Monetary policy has been entrusted to the European Central Bank, which is statutorily obliged to deliver stable money. Wim Duisenberg and his board cannot tailor the euro money supply to suit Britain.

None of this is to say that joining the euro is a good or a bad thing for Britain. Nor is it to say that the conventional wisdom of Brussels and Frankfurt is mistaken. It is simply to point out that, by the standards of convergence which the Blair government has set, it is difficult to see at this point how they will get there.

Martin Kettle on the increasingly clever campaign against gay rights and same-sex marriages in the US

Gays get a bashing

"LET US be clear about this," says the man at the centre of the argument in a city that calls itself the crossroads of the world. "This is an attack on the institution of marriage, and it's going on throughout the world and not just here." Today Anchorage, tomorrow the world. But not if Alaska State Senator Loren Leman, arch-opponent of gay marriage, has his way. "Here in Alaska," Leman promises, "we are going to stop them."

This week campaigning begins in earnest for what at first sight is one of the world's more unusual referendums — the vote, due in November, on whether to ban same-sex marriages in Alaska. Recherché perhaps, but Leman is adamant that the world needs to keep an eye on his campaign to stop such marriages with a clause in the state constitution. It can't come too soon for him, especially now that an Alaska court has just ruled that a marriage between an Anchorage gay couple, Gene Dugan and Jay Brause, would not be illegal.

"This has become a premier issue of our times," Leman says. "If they can get a foothold somewhere — whether it's Alaska, or Hawaii, or Vermont, or Denmark — then that will be only the start. They'll flock to that jurisdiction to get married, and then they'll go back to wherever they came from and claim the rights of marriage."

If Leman sniffs a conspiracy on the Alaskan summer wind, then Allison Mender, a local pro-gay marriage campaigner, is only too ready to confirm the Republican's worst fears. "Yes, I'd agree with that," she says. "Once we achieve the right somewhere, then the litigation to enforce those marriage rights will begin everywhere."

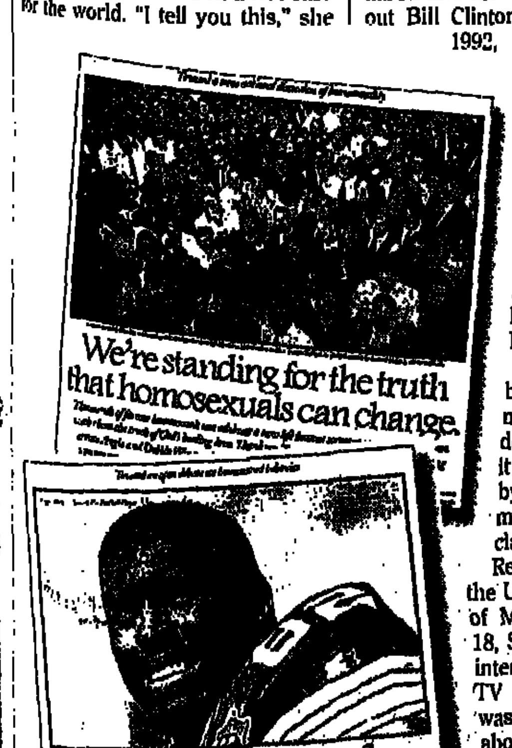
Like Leman, family law expert Mender sees the argument that is about to be fought out across the remote wastes of Alaska as a test case for the world. "I tell you this," she says. "They're on the wrong side of history. Sooner or later someone's going to get married somewhere. It comes down to who gets there first."

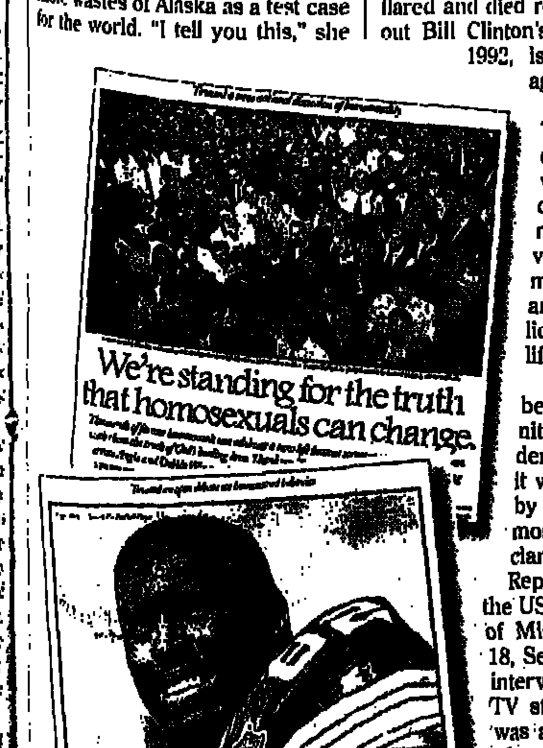
Talk like this makes many conservative politicians shrill with indignation. In the past few weeks, from Alaska to Florida, increasing numbers of them have again been giving voice to their feelings, with a mixture of shudders at the thought of the thing they are seeking to prevent and excitement at the opportunity for a no-holds-barred crusade against what they see as a subversive and ungodly force.

In Florida earlier this month, the eastern part of the state near Orlando was consumed by a terrifying series of forest fires. To scientists, the fires were caused by lighting igniting tinder-dry trees after a prolonged drought. To Pat Robertson of the Christian Coalition, the fires were divine punishment for Orlando's decision to allow rainbow banners to be flown from city flagpoles during a gay pride celebration. "I don't think I'd be waving those flags in God's face if I were you," Robertson warned.

The gay issue is back at the centre of the political stage this summer in the United States and, as Mender admits in Anchorage, it is there because two sides are spoiling for a confrontation. The focal issue in several places is whether two people of the same sex ought ever to be entitled to a lawful marriage, with the legal and social rights that go with that status. In three states — Alaska, Hawaii and Vermont — that question is currently before the courts; in Alaska and Hawaii, it is also being put to referendums, and it is an important issue in several state elections this year, notably in California.

Yet around the gay marriage issue there are wider debates. The unresolved public argument in the US about homosexuality, which has flared and died repeatedly throughout Bill Clinton's presidency since 1992, is suddenly flaring again in this mid-term election year. The elections will offer a test of whether the American right can halt, maybe even reverse, the forward march of gay rights and the uneasy public acceptance of gay lifestyles and culture.



If one remark can be said to have ignited this summer tinderbox of gay politics, it was something said by one of America's most senior politicians, the leader of the Republican majority in the US Senate, Trent Lott of Mississippi. On June 18, Senator Lott gave an interview to a local cable TV station in which he was asked for his views about homosexuality. Lott's response, which initially appeared to be an unrehearsed set of thoughts, now seems to have been carefully sculpted. "My father had a problem with alcoholism," Lott replied.

Do you take this man . . . ? An Alaskan court ruled that a marriage between Gene Dugan and Jay Brause would not be illegal, but newspaper ads (below) reflect a backlash against gay rights PHOTO: ROB STAPLETON

"Other people have sex addiction. Other people are kleptomaniacs. I mean, there are all kinds of problems and addictions and difficulties and experiences of this kind that are wrong. But you should try to work with that person to learn to conquer that problem."

Lott has been here before. Like many religious conservative Republicans, he is on record as saying that homosexuality is a sin. This time, however, Lott was careful not to be bashing the Bible. Nor was he advocating any form of legal discrimination. He was putting himself at the head of an increasingly articulate conservative campaign which tries to portray homosexuality as a matter of choice, or even of human frailty. Predictably, his remarks caused a furore.

But Lott's comments were soon revealed as the tip of an iceberg of activity. This month, amid widespread publicity, a group of 15 conservative organisations sponsored a series of newspaper advertisements on the same theme. Three ads have so far appeared. In the first, a woman called Anna Paulk, described as "wife, mother and former lesbian", told readers of the New York Times how God had helped her to "overcome homosexuality". According to Paulk's story, she had turned to the lesbian life in reaction against being sexually abused by a teenage boy. Then she discovered God and was able to "leave" homosexuality. "I'm living proof that Truth can set you free," said the headline on the ad.

> **'Homosexuality is one area where people still use words like sinful and abnormal'**

The following day, an ad in the Washington Post continued the theme. This time the picture featured a "gathering of Exodus, a nationwide ex-gay ministry" in which several hundred people were depicted under the headline: "We're standing for the truth that homosexuals can change." This ad explained that the Christian groups were motivated "more by love than hate" and said they offered solutions to "problems for homosexuals that even condoms can't fix".

The final ad, in USA Today, played the race card against the gay lobby. Featuring a picture of the black American footballer Reggie White, star of the Green Bay Packers and a part-time minister who has called homosexuality "one of the biggest sins in the Bible", it accused the "activist homosexual lobby" of intolerance, "demanding the culture hear no other view but theirs".

On their own, three newspaper ads do not a backlash make. But the prominence of the advertising campaign coincides with other political moves that are hard to see as mere coincidence. Apart from Lott, several other prominent, if predictable, Republicans joined the fray. Dick Armey echoed Lott in saying that homosexuality is a sin. Jesse Helms called it "sickening". More importantly, a Colorado Republican Congressman, Joel Hefley, is now gathering support to block a move to abolish anti-gay discrimination in federal job-hiring policies.

And then there is the Jim Hormel nomination saga. Hormel, a San Francisco businessman and long-time Democratic Party political donor, was nominated last autumn by President Clinton to be the new US ambassador in Luxembourg. But Hormel is a gay activist. He finances gay rights campaigns in San Francisco, a city synonymous with sexual diversity.

For the first time, the ambassadorship to the smallest country in Europe has become a Washington controversy. Led by Lott, Republicans have blocked the nomination, tut-tutting against the idea that such a man could represent the American way in a conservative and Catholic state such as Luxembourg, and refusing to schedule the necessary hearings to allow Hormel to take up the post. As a result, the Hormel nomination is effectively dead, even though Clinton cannot afford to offend the gay lobby by admitting defeat.

The common theme underlying all these issues is that they are further evidence of the continuing takeover of the mainstream Republican party by Christian conservatives, for whom opposition to gay equality is what Americans like to call a "hot button" issue.

For a campaigner such as Robert Knight of the Family Research Council (FRC), one of the groups which financed the recent newspaper advertisements, any opportunity to promote the issue represents time well spent by his party. "This is one of the best things that could happen to the Republican party," says Knight. "People don't want this stuff. When it is explained in a clear manner, they can't help but win more support."

If the high-water mark has indeed been reached for the politically correct broadening and deepening process that has followed the civil rights legislation of the 1960s — a conclusion which many would dispute but of which there are several signs — then gay equality may find itself last in and first out.

That is certainly Leman's hope in the Alaska campaign. "Homosexuals should be protected in just the same way as everyone else," he says. "As people with innate civil rights, not because they are members of a group. This has gone too far."

Republican politicians who take stands like Leman or Lott get enthusiastic backing from their own supporters, but are they becoming out of step with wider public opinion? Polls this year suggest growing public tolerance towards same-sex relations, even if a majority still disapprove. "The backlash is now against the people who make the extremist remarks," says Kathleen Debold, of the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund. "A lot of that is because of how far we've come."

That's both true and not true. In his recent book, 'One Nation — After All, Alan Wolfe, a Boston university sociologist, revealed an extremely tolerant country, where people adjusted to social and cultural change as best they could, while trying hard to live rather traditionally moral lives. The exception to their tolerance, however, was homosexuality.

"Homosexuality is the one area," Wolfe found, "where people still use words like 'sinful, abnormal, wrong and immoral'. Middle Americans don't identify with gay people who talk about marriage or children or living in the suburbs."

Once again, a contest for hearts and minds — and votes — has been joined on the unresolved issues of homosexuality. Curiously, this latest battle for Middle America is being fought on the distant fringes of the nation, in places such as Hawaii and Alaska. But the outcome will affect not just the US but many other nations — including Britain.

Bishops' hard line, page 11

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 16 1998

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Puppet master deemed to pull too many strings

ALASTAIR Campbell is described by the Prime Minister as his "official spokesman". A tough operator who holds press briefings twice a day, he clearly enjoys Tony Blair's unqualified trust.

Nothing wrong with that, it might be argued, except that some MPs — not all of them Tories — suspect Mr Campbell of playing a more sinister role: politicising the Government press service, leaking favourable reports to selected journalists, and generally undermining the role of Parliament and the reputation of its more troublesome members.

Anxieties about what, precisely, Mr Campbell is up to surfaced during an investigation by the all-party Public Administration Select Committee into the operation of the overstretched Government Information Service. Some 25 heads of information or deputies have left the service in the past year amid claims that the Government prefers political sympathisers to career civil servants.

The committee's official report, however, made no mention of this. So its Tory and Liberal members took the unusual step of issuing a minority report, accusing Labour members of being Mr Campbell's "glove puppets" and whitewashing complaints about the politicisation of the government press machine.

The two reports were almost diametrically opposed, one finding "no clear evidence" that Mr Campbell gave preferential treatment to some journalists, while the other called for further investigation into claims of "a sharp growth in pre-briefing" before announcements are made to Parliament. The minority report called Mr Campbell a "Labour party hatchet man" whose £87,000 salary should come from party funds.

The Speaker of the Commons, Betty Boothroyd, has rebuked ministers several times for allowing policies to be leaked to the press before Parliament has been informed. Accusing fingers have been pointed at Mr Campbell but so far, at least, he remains officially in the clear.

CHECKS are to be carried out across Britain on the quality of milk after fears that pasteurisation is not enough to kill some harmful bacteria that may cause chronic intestine inflammation in humans.

The Government immediately played down the health risks to try to avoid another food scare and further financial loss for farmers, already reeling from the BSE crisis.

Pasteurised milk was thought to destroy the *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*, but out of 62 samples from 16 dairies tested in Northern Ireland, six batches of pasteurised milk contained the bacteria. It is thought to be a possible cause of Crohn's disease, which affects more than 80,000 people in Britain — particularly the young — and is difficult to diagnose.

But the Department of Health stressed that on the basis of what is known about the bacteria there is no need for anyone to change their dietary habits.

ULSTER Unionists were infuriated by the Dublin government's decision to release from prison Thomas McMahon, the IRA terrorist who murdered Lord Mountbatten. The assassination — the only IRA killing of a member of the royal family — rocked the British establishment, and Mr McMahon was sentenced to life imprisonment for planting the bomb that killed the earl and three others on a boat in Co Sligo in 1979.

Mr McMahon, who was released as part of the Good Friday peace agreement, gave up his links with the IRA more than a decade ago and had already been on day-release from prison in Dublin. Two members of the Scots Guards, who were jailed for murdering a Belfast teenager, are expected to be released shortly as part of the same agreement.

A SMALL piece of slate inscribed with the word "Artognov" was found at Tintagel in Cornwall, the traditional birthplace of King Arthur. The stone, described by some archaeologists as "the find of a lifetime", was the first scrap of tangible evidence that King Arthur may have been a man and not just a myth.

The stone, believed to date from the sixth century, was found on the edge of a cliff overlooking a tavern traditionally known as Merlin's Cave. Geoffrey Wainwright, chief archaeologist of English Heritage, said that the name Artognov, probably pronounced Arthnou, was close enough to Arthur to refer to the legendary warrior king. "This is where myth meets history," he said.

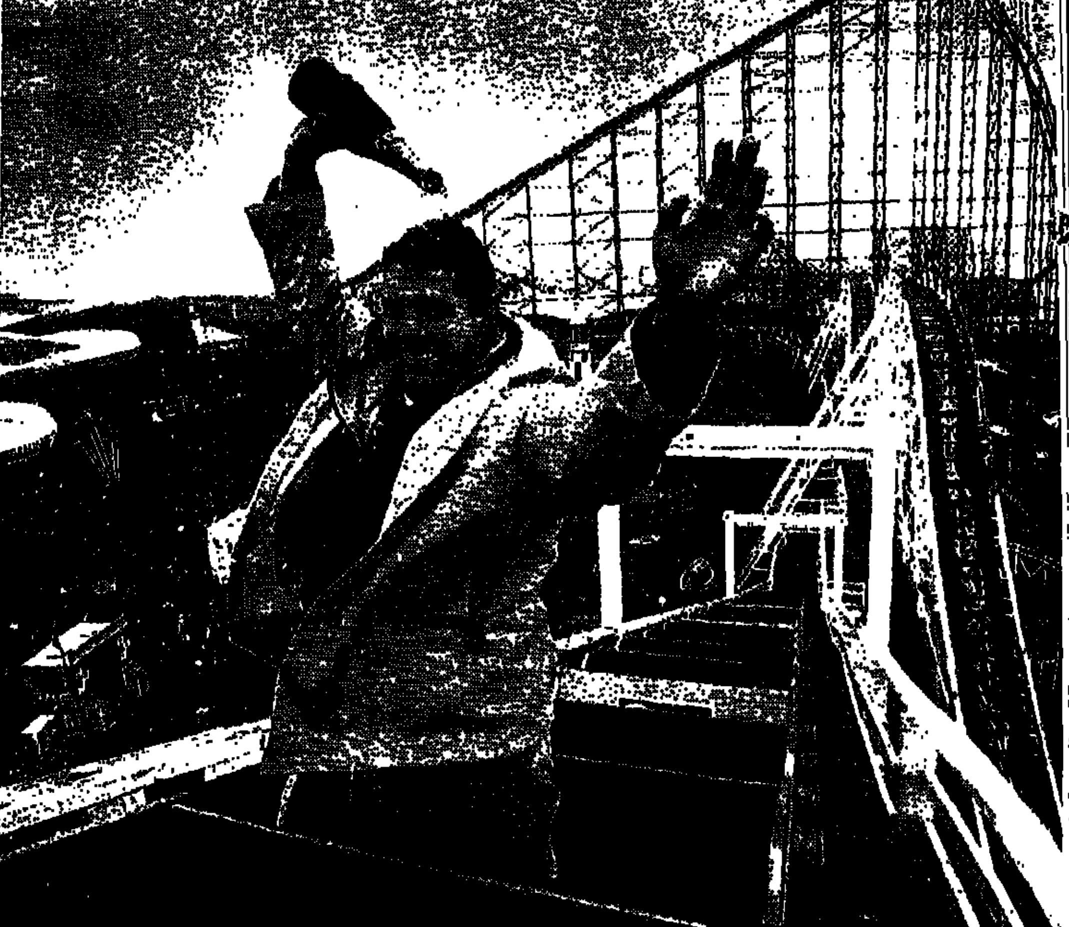
The discovery will do wonders for English Heritage and the Cornish tourist trade but is unlikely to be the end of the Arthurian story.

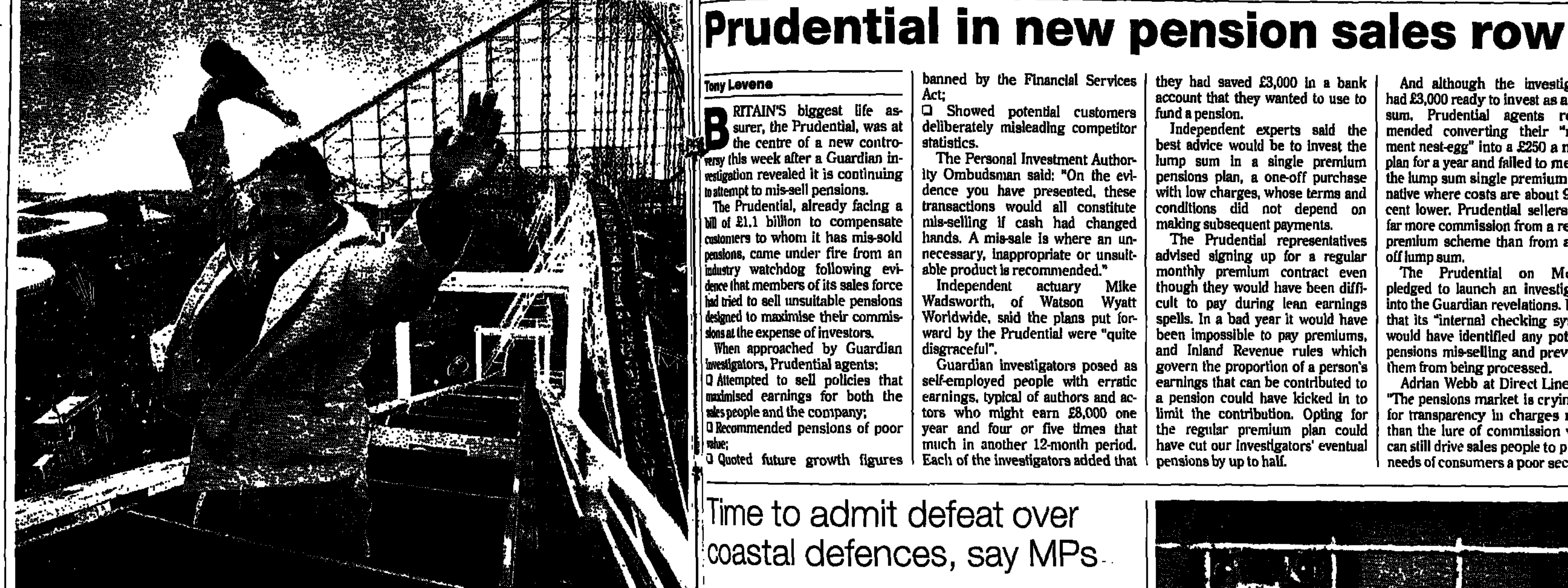
A WRITERS' charity, the Royal Literary Fund, which has for more than 200 years struggled to give small sums to destitute authors, is exultantly looking forward to a £40 million bonanza from the Disney organisation, which is negotiating to buy out the last 27 years of copyright for A A Milne's Winnie the Pooh stories.

The fund is one of the Milne estate's five beneficiaries. The others are Westminster School, Milne's descendants, the descendants of his illustrator, E H Shepard, and the London Garrick Club, where some of the 1,300 members are campaigning for a payout of £39,000 each.









Taken for a ride . . . Richard Rodriguez, a lecturer in communications at Miami university, makes the final circuit of his rollercoaster marathon at Blackpool to claim the world record as King of the Coasters, after travelling 11,362 miles in 47 days on the Big Dipper PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

New heroin epidemic predicted

Alan Travis

BRITAIN is on the edge of a teenage heroin epidemic fed by dealers who have ditched the narcotic's junkie image by marketing it as just another cheap recreational drug like cannabis or Ecstasy.

The rebranding of heroin in the past two years has been so successful that the drug has reached epidemic proportions in smaller, previously heroin-free, cities and towns such as Bristol, Hull and Luton, according to a new Home Office report.

They escaped the worst ravages of the 1980s drug culture that terrorised some inner-city areas of London, Manchester and Glasgow, where the report says heroin abuse has stabilised.

Mounting heroin use among under-19s will spread to many other medium-sized towns and cities this year and next, says the Police Research Group study, based on the experience of drug action teams across England and Wales. The study says more than a third of the teenagers now experimenting with heroin are under 16, with those aged 14 to 25 most at risk.

It suggests that there are already 1,500 teenage heroin users in Bristol alone and concludes that the country is "in the early stages" of a second heroin epidemic.

The new younger users see little difference between heroine and their regular fare of less-addictive dance drugs. Heroin has been renamed brown, or browns, and sold in £5 and £10 wraps that can be smoked in spliffs like cannabis. The drug's street price is the same as an Ecstasy tablet, amphetamine wrap or cannabis deal.

The dealers escape police detection by vetting potential customers and using pagers and mobile phones to offer them "deals on wheels" or "home delivery" to avoid operating openly in pubs and clubs.

Some middle-class youths, particularly clubbers, use heroin as a "chill out" drug, but most new users are unemployed under-achievers living on the poorest estates.

Most users start by smoking heroin, but there is a significant move towards injecting. "During the first half of the 1990s heroin was eschewed by most young people as a highly addictive drug used only by 'junkies'. However, since around 1996, signs, indicators and rumours that heroin is making a return have been building . . . It is, unfortunately, reasonable to suggest that we are facing a second heroin epidemic," says the study.

This is being driven by imports of cheap heroin from southwest Asia brought via the Balkans and across Europe into Britain. A fall in price, strong availability and high purity all indicate a sustained supply route.

The authors say although the Government is committed to a major investment in drug services, there is a dearth of services for heroin users such as needle exchanges, harm reduction and detoxification units, and the prescribing of the heroin substitute, methadone.

Calls for genetic food ban rejected

Tim Radford

THE row over genetically engineered foods took a new twist this week as the Government refused to ban them after tests showed they could damage the immune systems of rats and stunt their growth.

The Conservative health spokesman, Alan Duncan, pointed to "massive consumer suspicion" in view of a report on the television programme World In Action, broadcast on Monday, that rats at the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen had eaten genetically modified (GM) potatoes for 100 days and suffered stunted growth and damage to their immune systems. The programme questioned the safety of other GM products.

The Liberal Democrat environment spokesman, Norman Baker, said the results showed that "we have become the guinea pigs in a gigantic experiment".

The food minister, Jeff Rooker, turned down calls for an immediate ban but insisted that the Government would have an "ultra-cautionary" approach.

However, Ian Gibson, Labour MP for Norwich North and a member of the Commons science and technology committee, said he was worried by the Rowett Institute's findings and called on the Government to act. He said ministers should consider calling a moratorium on the sale of GM products while more tests were carried out.

But Derek Burke, a former government adviser on food technology, said calls for a moratorium on GM foods were "an over-reaction".

There are four genetically modified foods on sale in Britain: tomato paste, vegetarian cheese, maize and soya.

Although environmentalists are worried about the threat of "super weeds", triggered by the arrival of herbicide-resistant crops, the latest row is over research into the genes that naturally protect crops from attack by insects and worms.

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Prudential in new pension sales row

Tony Levene

BRITAIN'S biggest life assurer, the Prudential, was at the centre of a new controversy this week after a Guardian investigation revealed it is continuing to attempt to mis-sell pensions.

The Prudential, already facing a bill of £1.1 billion to compensate customers to whom it has mis-sold pensions, came under fire from an industry watchdog following evidence that members of its sales force had tried to sell unsuitable pensions designed to maximise their commissions at the expense of investors.

When approached by Guardian investigators, Prudential agents:

❑ Attempted to sell policies that maximised earnings for both the sales people and the company;

❑ Recommended pensions of poor value;

❑ Quoted future growth figures banned by the Financial Services Act;

❑ Showed potential customers deliberately misleading competitor statistics.

The Personal Investment Authority Ombudsman said: "On the evidence you have presented, these transactions would all constitute mis-selling if cash had changed hands. A mis-sale is where an unnecessary, inappropriate or unsuitable product is recommended."

Independent actuary Mike Wadsworth, of Watson Wyatt Worldwide, said the plans put forward by the Prudential were "quite disgraceful".

Guardian investigators posed as self-employed people with erratic earnings, typical of authors and actors who might earn £8,000 one year and four or five times that much in another 12-month period. Each of the investigators added that they had saved £3,000 in a bank account that they wanted to use to fund a pension.

Independent experts said the best advice would be to invest the lump sum in a single premium pensions plan, a one-off purchase with low charges, whose terms and conditions did not depend on making subsequent payments.

The Prudential representatives advised signing up for a regular monthly premium contract even though they would have been difficult to pay during lean earnings spells. In a bad year it would have been impossible to pay premiums, and Inland Revenue rules which govern the proportion of a person's earnings that can be contributed to a pension could have kicked in to limit the contribution. Opting for the regular premium plan could have cut our investigators' eventual pensions by up to half.

And although the investigators had £3,000 ready to invest as a lump sum, Prudential agents recommended converting their "retirement nest-egg" into a £250 a month plan for a year and failed to mention the lump sum single premium alternative where costs are about 90 per cent lower. Prudential sellers earn far more commission from a regular premium scheme than from a one-off lump sum.

The Prudential on Monday pledged to launch an investigation into the Guardian revelations. It said that its "internal checking system" would have identified any potential pensions mis-selling and prevented them from being processed.

Adrian Webb at Direct Line said: "The pensions market is crying out for transparency in charges rather than the lure of commission which can still drive sales people to put the needs of consumers a poor second."

Time to admit defeat over coastal defences, say MPs

Paul Brown

PARTS of the British coast at risk of flooding should be abandoned to the sea, a committee of MPs has suggested.

Continuing to build ever higher defences to keep out the rising sea is no longer an option, and retreat to new positions inland should begin immediately in some places, says the Commons agriculture committee. People who are forced to abandon homes and fields for the general good of the community should be compensated by government.

Those selling any of the 1.3 million properties classified as at risk from flooding should be forced by law to disclose the danger to potential purchasers.

The recommendations delighted environmental groups but angered farmers and landowners, who said MPs had oversimplified the issue.

In a startling introduction to the report, the MPs look forward to a time 200 years hence when the Thames through London is half a mile wide, with large areas of Docklands and even the Palace of Westminster lost to ever higher tides. Cardiff, Swansea, Bristol, Grimsby, Hull and others face the same fate.

The beginning of the process is already observable along the East Coast. If there were no flood defences the annual cost of erosion and damage from flooding would be £2.1 billion. But the committee says keeping up coastal defences and making them ever stronger is not an option, both because it is too expensive and because it does not work. Eventually the forces of nature are too strong and defences are destroyed by the sea.

"It is time to declare an end to the centuries-old war with the sea and seek a peaceful accommodation with our former enemy," says the report. "It is better to plan a policy of managed realignment [of the coast] than to suffer the consequences of a deluded belief that we can maintain indefinitely an unbreachable Maginot line of towering sea walls and flood defences."

"Soft defences", where existing structures are removed and the sea allowed to reclaim land, are being experimented with.

Woman who killed goes free

Gerard Seenan

A WOMAN who stabbed her husband to death after enduring almost a quarter of a century of sexual abuse and violence was put on probation at the Old Bailey this week.

Diane Clark, aged 42, finally snapped when Graham Clark, aged 46, tried to throw her out of the home she shared with him and their five children in Farncombe, Surrey. As he leaned into the loft to pull out her suitcases, she stabbed him in the back with a kitchen knife.

The court had heard Mrs Clark described as a placid character who continually covered herself with long sleeves and sunglasses to try to hide the abuse she suffered.

Placing her on probation for three years, Judge Gerald Gordon spoke of the "smoking fuse of provocation" which Mrs Clark had laboured under before she let go and behaved in a way that was "totally out of character".

Women's groups welcomed the sentence and the Crown's decision to accept a reduced charge of manslaughter. "This is one of those cases where, after a number of years, a woman who has suffered continuous abuse and violence, has finally broken down and killed her partner," said a Women's Aid spokeswoman. "It is good to see that the judge has shown mercy and understanding."

Mrs Clark's defence counsel, Peter Feinberg QC, said she had endured violence and sexual abuse since the beginning of their marriage. She had been taking prescribed drugs since 1977 to help cope with anxiety. She was devastated by what she had done.

Safe behind bars: mink on the loose are being shot PHOTO: ANDREW TESTA

Mink freed by activists fall prey to farmers' guns

Sarah Hall

ANIMAL rights activists who released 6,000 mink in the New Forest last weekend have found their cause turning into a nightmare. Far from adjusting to freedom, the mink are wreaking havoc.

Since members of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) climbed over the perimeter fence of Crow Hill fur farm in Hampshire and smashed cages and cut wire, reports of mink killing birds of prey at an owl sanctuary in the New Forest are accompanied by rumours of their lashing out at cats and dogs.

The mink are paying the price for the activists' supposedly humane behaviour. "I will shoot them on sight," vowed Bruce Berry, owner of the New Forest Owl Sanctuary, which has already claimed at least 12 hides. Of the 4,000 mink which got beyond the fur farm near Ringwood, up to 2,000 have been shot, run over or caught in traps.

Public feeling is running high against the predator. The widely held belief that they are pests has caused Hampshire police to set up a "mink desk" helpline to deal with the concerns of villagers, who jammed their switchboard.

The ALF was unrepentant on Monday. "I know many of them are going to die, but at least they will have had a taste of freedom," said spokesman Robin Webb.

He claimed that the mink — about 50cm long with sharp teeth and aggressive temperaments — could adapt perfectly to life in the wild. He denied that the ecological balance would be disturbed by a ferocious carnivore which, not being native to this country, is unchecked by any predator.

But the activists were attacked by wildlife specialists. "We condemn the release of the mink in this way because of the incredible amount of harm to the environment and the suffering to other wild, pet and farm animals," said Alex Ross, a spokesman for the RSPCA.

The pressure group Respect for Animals questioned the ALF's action, given the Government's commitment — reiterated last week by animal welfare minister Elliot Morley — to bring an end to fur farming, despite a private member's bill on the issue having been dropped this session.

"I'm the last person to defend the Government unnecessarily, but they have repeatedly pledged to ban [the farming]. To carry out this sort of activity seems quite extraordinary."

In Brief

THE Probation Service is to be rebranded as the Public Protection Service in an attempt to banish its "too tolerant" image as part of the most radical shake-up in its 90-year-history.

INVESTIGATORS probing why the trawler Gaul sank in 1974 have made "significant findings" — two hatches and a door were open — after discovering the alleged spy ship off Norway.

ROGUE trader Nick Leeson, the man who brought down Barings bank, has had an operation to remove a cancerous tumour from his colon. He is serving more than six years for fraud in a Singapore jail.

THE Prince of Wales has asked senior aides to investigate claims that his two sons were in danger on a recent adventure trip in Wales when 13-year-old Prince Harry abseiled down a 50m dam without a safety helmet or safety line.

TWO men were arrested in Birmingham in connection with three linked murders in the London area, including those of two mothers shot in their homes in front of their children.

A MALE sergeant major, Joe Rushton, aged 37, is set to become the first acknowledged transsexual to serve in the army. A soldier for 17 years, he plans to change his name to Joanne and undergo a sex change.

CASINOS are to be allowed to advertise for the first time under plans announced by the Home Office to relax controls of the gaming industry.

GLENEAGLES hotel in Perthshire, the favourite destination of the rich and sporty, is up for sale and expected to fetch £110 million.

REG KRAY was unfairly denied parole when he applied earlier this year, according to leaked official documents that show evidence helpful to Kray was altered before the Parole Board considered it.

WOMEN who live within 3km of hazardous waste landfill sites have a 33 per cent higher risk of having babies with birth defects than those living further away, according to a report in the Lancet.

MORE than 1,200 staff have left the Child Support Agency this year, leading to a staffing crisis in the controversial department.

THE POET Laureate Ted Hughes has been awarded the Order of Merit, reflecting the Queen's respect for him as an "individual of exceptional distinction".

Cook calls Gadafy plot claim 'fantasy'

Richard Norton-Taylor

LABOUR MPs this week expressed growing disquiet about allegations of MI6 involvement in a plot to assassinate the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gadafy, despite government attempts to dismiss the claims outright by insisting there was no evidence that such an operation had been officially sanctioned.

In his first public comments on the allegations that surfaced last month, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, described reports of the alleged plot as "pure fantasy".

He said he was "absolutely satisfied" that Sir Malcolm Rifkind, his predecessor, had not authorised it.

He said: "I'm perfectly satisfied that SIS [the Secret Intelligence Service, known as MI6] never put forward any such proposal for an assassination attempt. Nor have I seen anything in the 15 months I have been in the job which would suggest that SIS has any interest, any role or any experience over the decades of any such escapade."

A senior Labour source said that while he did not believe the plot had been authorised, it appeared that "something happened". He referred to the possibility of "some oddball operation".

Other well-placed sources said Mr Cook's dismissal of the allegations did not explain why government lawyers had been locked for more than 48 hours in talks with the BBC, thrashing out what could be included and what details omitted from a Panorama investigation into allegations made by the former MI5 officer, David Shayler.

The programme, broadcast last week, included an interview with Mr Shayler in which he gave details of alleged MI6 involvement in a 1996 plot to assassinate Col Gadafy through one of its Arab agents — codenamed Tunworth — who had links with a militant Islamic group.

Mr Shayler said in the BBC programme that at the time of the operation he was in an MI5 section called G9, responsible for monitoring Libyan activities. He had meetings with Tunworth's MI6 handler — codenamed PT16B — who told him the service had been giving cash to the extremist group which was planning to kill Gadafy by putting a bomb on a road on which the Libyan leader was travelling. When the bomb exploded, however, Colonel Gadafy escaped unhurt, while several bystanders were hurt.

"Essentially you are paying in the region of £100,000 to carry out the murder of a foreign head of state," Mr Shayler said. "Quite apart from the fact that this money is being used, because the attack went wrong, to kill innocent people. No matter who is funding terrorism, it's still international terrorism."

Asked what effect his disclosures would have on attempts by Britain and the United States to get two agents handed over to be tried for the Lockerbie bombing, Mr Shayler said there was "no chance" of them being given up for trial.

"I think the British government would be far better off just publishing the entire evidence and saying this is what we have against the Libyan regime," he said.

Annie Machon, Mr Shayler's girlfriend, who also worked for MI5, told the BBC: "I think [the Government] are so touchy because they realise what he's saying is true. He headed up the Libyan section in MI5 for over two years, so he was very well informed about all matters relating to Libya.

"He also managed to develop a particularly good working relationship with his opposite number in MI6, and I gather that is how he found out the details of the plot to kill Gadafy," she said.

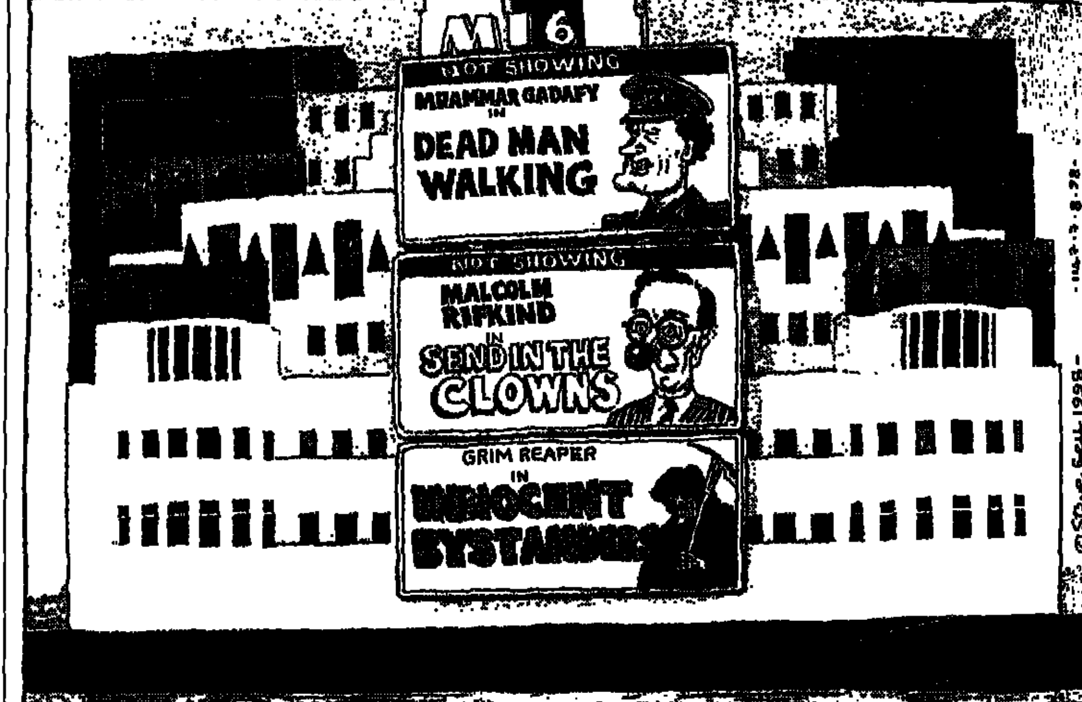
John Wadham, Mr Shayler's lawyer and director of the civil rights group Liberty, said his client had never alleged that Sir Malcolm Rifkind had known about the plot to kill Col Gadafy.

Mr Wadham said part of the allegation was that this plan had not been authorised as it should have been under the relevant legislation. He called for a judicial inquiry "to satisfy us all of the truth or otherwise of David's allegations".

Mr Shayler was arrested in Paris on August 1 and is in prison pending extradition to Britain where he faces charges under the Official Secrets Act.

In a separate development, British Special Branch police raided the New Zealand hotel room of Richard Tomlinson, a former MI6 officer, seizing his computer disks, mobile phone and papers relating to his trial.

Mr Tomlinson, who was recently released from a British jail after conviction under the Official Secrets Act, was last week served with a gagging injunction by the New Zealand authorities at the British government's request. He returned to Auckland after being prevented from travelling to Australia.



Ministers lose pay rise but nurses gain

Lucy Ward

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown plans to continue restraining Cabinet ministers' salaries for the rest of the Parliament in an attempt to set an example to wage bargainers in the public and private sectors.

Mr Brown has indicated to ministers — including new members of the Cabinet — that the post-election agreement not to accept the full ministerial salary increase should be made permanent.

The effective freeze, which is not under the Chancellor's control but would force ministers to break ranks if opting to take more, will see the average Cabinet minister sacrificing at least £64,000 before tax by the time of the next election. Cabinet ministers are paid about £90,000.

The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, meanwhile said he hoped to implement the next nurses' pay rise in full, as argument raged over the reasons for a fall-off in recruitment to the profession.

The minister said he accepted the need for pay to increase and hoped for a settlement next year "which won't need to be staged".

His comments came as nursing unions blamed a drop in student nurses on low pay. But a report last week suggested another deterrent to recruitment may be sex bias: though nine in 10 nurses are women, it is men who are most likely to climb the career ladder.

Christine Hancock, general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said the crucial issue was the need to establish levels of pay that would attract people into the profession. "Nurses must be paid in line with people in similar professions, otherwise they will continue to leave nursing or not enter it in the first place."

From December 1, when the second stage of this year's pay award is implemented, a D-grade staff nurse will earn a basic of between £12,855 and £14,705. Starting salaries for teachers are £14,500 and for police constables, £15,500.

● A radical overhaul of the way hospital consultants are paid, giving patients more say, was expected to be announced this week.

The basic consultant's salary starts at £44,780 and rises annually in five stages to £57,800. Beyond that, consultants have to convince an advisory committee that they have reached higher levels of excellence.

There has been some reform of the awards system already because of suspicions that it was unfair. Award holders' names were not published, doctors had to be nominated by their peers, which led to cronyism, and doctors from ethnic minorities were under-represented.

MPs blame rival departments for Montserrat disaster fiasco

Ewen MacAskill

STINGING criticism of the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, was delivered last week by MPs investigating the aftermath of the Montserrat volcano disaster.

A report by the Commons International Development Committee complained of poor co-ordination between the two Cabinet ministers' departments, "unnecessary tensions and inefficiencies".

The Conservative spokesman on development issues, Gary Streeter, asked: "What specific steps will be taken to ensure there is no more of this bumbling incompetence?"

When the volcano erupted in July last year on the Caribbean island, a British dependent territory, killing 19 people, survivors fled to the safer northern part of the island, and the Royal Navy was sent to help.

Ms Short ran into controversy over her reported response to a request from the Montserratian government for help from the UK — "They'll be asking for golden elephants next" — but she said it was taken out of context.

The Montserrat disaster highlighted a turf war between the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development. Before the general election, the DFID's predecessor, the Overseas Development Agency, had been part of the Foreign Office, and there was resentment in the Foreign Office when it was made a separate department. Responsibility for dealing with the havoc caused by the volcanic eruption was divided between the two departments: the Foreign Office in charge of constitutional arrangements, and DFID of funding.

The committee, in its most damning passage, said: "Experience over Montserrat suggests that when difficult decisions have to be taken quickly this spirit of co-operation between the departments is placed under severe strain.

"There will always be unnecessary tensions and weaknesses if DFID money is used to fund Foreign and Commonwealth Office political priorities."

Ms Short was also condemned last week for saying that disaster aid to relieve the plight of millions of people starving to death in Sudan was unnecessary.

The Commons Select Committee on International Development criticised her for making premature statements "in such bald terms, that there was no lack of money or resources for Sudan" to MPs and the public.

Ms Short had attacked the appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee, which co-ordinates the relief work of 15 British agencies, for the war-torn country as "unnecessary".

She had also told MPs: "The problem is not providing money; it is applying political pressure so that food can get through to the people."

The report also criticised Ms Short for claiming that the aid appeal "reduced pressure on the Sudanese rebels to agree a ceasefire.

Government stalls and dilutes information bill

David Hencke

THE Government has dropped the Freedom of Information Bill from next year's legislative programme — so that a newer and weaker version can be drawn up by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to go before Parliament in November 1999.

Support for a radical bill has been weakened significantly following the sacking of David Clark as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Jack Cunningham, Mr Clark's successor, is reported to regard the bill as "a chattering classes issue". He has been happy to surrender Cabinet Office staff and part of his budget to the Home Office so that he no longer has direct responsibility for it.

Derry Irvine, the Lord Chancellor and the bill's strongest supporter, is expected to be outvoted next month when ministers meet to decide legislation to be included in the Queen's Speech.

Mr Straw fought to delay and weaken it at almost every cabinet committee meeting this year.

Labour MPs are unhappy with the Government's reported moves. Tess Kingham, Labour MP for Gloucester, said: "I think [the bill] would do a lot to help restore the public's faith in politicians. It is a great symbolic thing. We say we're going to have more openness, so this should not be put on the back-burner."

Mr Blair cannot risk dropping the bill altogether as it would mean reneging on a manifesto commitment.

Hard line on gays 'will help church relations'

Madeleine Bunting

THE hardline stance on homosexuality taken by the Lambeth Conference will help Anglican relations with Muslims and Catholics, said the Archbishop of Canterbury last weekend on the last day of the Anglican Communion's gathering in Canterbury.

Reviewing the three weeks of debate and prayer among the 735 bishops from all over the world, George Carey welcomed last week's resolution maintaining that homosexuality is incompatible with Scripture. But he said the decision allowed for acceptance of homosexuals in the Church and continuing dialogue with them.

"We have been quite open about acknowledging our differences. We have worked hard, and the result, while restating a traditional position on homosexual practice, clearly includes homosexual people in the Church."

He spoke after bishops involved in the campaign for blessings of same-sex relationships and the ordination of practising homosexuals — both expressly ruled out in the conference resolution — admitted their deep disappointment at the fundamentalist interpretation of Scripture.

The Rt Rev Richard Holloway, Bishop of Edinburgh, said he had been deeply frustrated by the debate and did not recognise such fundamentalism to be part of Anglicanism.

But Dr Carey, who threw his weight behind the conservatives in the debate to declare homosexuality a sin, said: "We mustn't polarise on this matter. It is not simply a cultural matter, of the West versus Africa or the First World versus the Third World. On this issue, the rifts move through all the churches. What we must do is continue to listen to each other and the experience of homosexuals, while they must continue to listen to us.

"I believe that what we have said will help the mission of the Church. It is going to help those in Muslim countries. It is also going to reassure our ecumenical partners where we are positioned in matters of our theology and sexual morality."

The Vatican's envoy to the conference, Cardinal Edward Cassidy, warned at its start that any softening of the Anglican Church's position on sexuality would threaten Anglican-Catholic relations.

Many of the strongest opponents of homosexuality came from places where there is bitter confrontation between Christians and Muslims, such as Nigeria, Sudan, Pakistan and southeast Asian states.

The resolution represented a crushing defeat for liberal sections of the Church against a powerful alliance of conservative evangelicals from the United States, Australia, Africa and Singapore, who threatened to walk out unless the conference upheld traditional Anglican teaching on sexual morality.

The setback for liberals will be felt keenly in North America, where there are many actively gay and lesbian clergy, particularly in difficult inner-city parishes. The presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church of the US, the Rt Rev Frank Griswold, who has admitted ordaining gay priests, refused to say he would stop doing so.

"We will have to go back to our Church and figure out how it becomes part of our experience," said Bishop Griswold of the resolution.

Making a decisive intervention in the tense two-and-a-half hour debate, to prevent the communion from disintegrating, Dr Carey threw his office behind the conservatives.

"This has been a difficult and painful debate, whatever one's views. I became conscious during this debate that we could allow disagreement to become division," he said in an unscripted speech.

"I stand wholeheartedly with traditional Anglican orthodoxy. I see no room in the Scriptures and in the entire Christian tradition for sexual activity outside marriage."

The huge majority, 526 votes to 70 with 45 abstentions, represented a personal triumph for Dr Carey. Keeping the Lambeth Conference united has been a critical test of his leadership.

Many African bishops said it was Dr Carey's own views on homosexuality and the relationships he has built up on his visits to Africa which prevented them from walking out of the conference in Canterbury.

During the debate, the Rt Rev Alexander Malik, Bishop of Lahore, Pakistan, voiced the horror of many bishops at the idea of same-sex unions and the ordination of active homosexuals.

"It is not gay bashing to uphold the authority of Scripture. It is a matter of faith and dogma. What will we do at the next Lambeth when people ask for blessings for union with their pet animals?"

Bishop Chukwuma of Nigeria voices his opposition to gay clergy outside the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury PHOTO: KIERN DOHERTY

The result is a setback to the campaign for gay rights within the Church of England. Bishops currently teach that faithful homosexual relationships are acceptable for the laity but not for clergy. In reality, there are a significant number of practising homosexual priests.

The Lambeth Conference, which meets once every decade, is only advisory and has no power to bar gay priests. But any softening of the Church of England's stance is extremely unlikely given the vehemence with which bishops, particularly the Africans, warned that toleration of homosexuality in one part of the Anglican Church might seriously damage another.

The only concession the liberals managed to get into the resolution was that the Church should continue to listen to homosexuals.

The Rt Rev Catherine Roskam, Bishop of New York, warned: "To condemn homosexuality is evangelistic suicide in my region. It will be a pyrrhic victory and you will have a divided Church."

Outside the hall, there were bitter confrontations between advocates of gay rights and opponents. The Rt Rev Emmanuel Chukwuma, Bishop of Enugu, Nigeria, tried to "cure" Richard Kirker, spokesman of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, by laying on hands. "Repent of your sin. You have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Your Church is dying in Europe because you condone immorality. You have made yourselves homosexuals because of your carnality," he told him.

Some bishops believe this Lambeth Conference could be the last of the 10-yearly events, because of the cost and logistics of running them. There are also complaints that such international gatherings should not be just for bishops. Dr Carey has suggested that a more representative event, recognising the importance of the laity, should take place early next century, perhaps in Africa.

Field hits out at spin doctors

Lucy Ward

FRANK Field, the former welfare minister, last week launched the latest salvo in his post-resignation fightback with an assault on spin doctors, whose activities he called a cancer at the heart of the Government.

After coming under fierce attack, some of it via unsourced but vicious press briefings, the former minister blamed "a medley of spin doctors" for his treatment.

His comments, the latest episode in a saga running since Tony Blair's Cabinet reshuffle last month, came after the former minister had already publicly blamed his former boss, Harriet Harman, and the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, for allegedly blocking his ideas on welfare reform.

The counter-attack came in the form of government statements signalling a move to practical action on reform — a scarcely coded dig at Mr Field's "over-theoretical approach".

But Mr Field grabbed headlines with an interview on BBC Radio: "In the long run, you cannot run a government like this. It's a cancer that will eat away at the heart of our very existence and undermine the way ministers behave . . . I hope [the spin doctors] will be put in order quite shortly."

Mr Field later renewed his attack on Mr Brown when he portrayed one of the Chancellor's pet projects as an inducement to fraud. He criticised Mr Brown's working family tax credit as threatening to pull "employees into a spider's web of dishonesty and corruption".

The Chancellor outlined plans for the US-style tax credit scheme last year. Supporters say it will sharpen work incentives: those on low pay become eligible for tax rebates.

Mr Field, in his speech to the Social Market Foundation in London, said the working family tax credit "is fraught with great dangers" such as huge bonuses for dishonesty and a strengthening of the employers' hold over its workforce.

He said it could work if people were honest, but that was unlikely because employers could persuade workers "of the benefits of a very low wage which entitles them to maximum workers family tax credit with perhaps major cash payments on top of this fraud-determined minimum wage".

Finance, page 19

MPs damn easy profits of rail sell-off

Ewen MacAskill

THE most powerful of the Commons select committees last week issued a damning verdict on rail privatisation, which saw a handful of former British Rail managers become multi-millionaires within months.

The Public Affairs Committee, in a long list of complaints about the sell-off, concluded there should have been a method for the Government to have clawed back a share of profits.

Three companies responsible for rolling-stock were sold off in January and February 1996 for £1.8 billion. By December 1997, all three had been sold on for £2.7 billion, an increase of 50 per cent. The most notorious case was Sandy Anderson, who made £33 million from the sale of Porterbrook to Stagecoach.

MPs on the cross-party committee said: "Such large profits risk discrediting privatisation as a whole. The public are understandably concerned when they see a small number of individuals making personal fortunes at a time when complaints about the industry are rising and many in the industry are losing their jobs."

The transport department published proposals for privatisation in 1992, and legislation followed in 1993. British Rail was reorganised into almost 100 businesses.

The committee, criticising the transport department, said: "We consider that the department should have considered carefully at an early stage in the sale process the case for taking clawback provisions allowing the Government to share in profits made if the companies were sold on, and recorded that consideration."

Rail privatisation cost the taxpayer almost £1.4 billion, by far the most expensive sell-off of all the industries privatised by the Tories.

The cost of electricity privatisation fell well behind at £100 million, although this figure excludes redundancies, and British Steel came in at £47.5 million.

Razor fish bring holiday chaos

Amelia Gentleman

A SHOAL of razor fish wrought havoc on a crowded beach last weekend, slashing the feet of about 800 holidaymakers paddling in the sea.

Thousands of tourists, making the most of the hottest weekend of the year, had to be evacuated from the area.

Swimmers with blood pouring from their lacerated feet limped off the sands at Paignton and Preston beaches at Torbay, Devon, as coastguards and police rallied to help ambulance staff in treating the injured, many of whom were children.

The beaches were immediately evacuated and the surrounding roads sealed off. But hundreds had already been injured by the sharp shells, which had been exposed by the unusually low tide.

Other people encountered more mundane problems as they sought to bask in the sun which shone over much of Britain last weekend.

With temperatures reaching peaks of around 30C in the southwest of England and Wales, thousands of drivers ignored warnings of congestion in coastal areas and took to the road. Drizzle was expected to set in again by the end of the week.

Burma's misery compounded

HERE are two questions to ponder about Myanmar (leaving aside another question: why has the military regime changed the country's name from Burma?). First, why was last weekend's anniversary of events on August 8, 1988 in Rangoon commemorated abroad so much less energetically than similar anniversaries for what happened a year later in Tiananmen Square? Burma's young student leaders had chosen the date — 8-8-88 — for its auspicious effect, challenging the military junta which had just declared martial law. (The foreign activists arrested in Rangoon last Sunday were handing out leaflets with the message — "8-8-88: don't give up"). The student protest was met with repeated gunfire not only in the capital but across the country. No one has been able to count the bodies, but far more — thousands — died in Burma on that day 10 years ago than in China the following year.

The second question is why 350,000 men — the officers and soldiers of the Burmese armed forces — are frightened of one woman — the Nobel Peace Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi — Forced by international pressure to lift the formal conditions of her house arrest, the generals of the Slorc — the appropriately ugly acronym for the regime they set up in September 1988 — continue to harass her in ways which are simultaneously cruel and absurd.

This question is easy to answer. Ms Suu Kyi has created a model of passive resistance against which the generals have no effective counter. She is protected to some extent by foreign opinion, but the members of her National League for Democracy have no such protection. Amnesty International reports that there are more than 1,200 long-term political prisoners held by the military junta. Some have spent 10 years in prison simply for writing letters or handing out leaflets, and are now physically broken. Entire village populations among the country's ethnic minorities have been evicted by the army or forced to perform *corvée* labour.

In the global scene of human rights abuses, Burma/Myanmar comes at the most horrific end of the scale. Some regional analysts in Bangkok believe that the junta is showing signs of internal strain. It is at a dead end and internally divided, while its former head of state, General Ne Win, may be in terminal decline. The time is long overdue to step up foreign pressure with serious trade sanctions from which Western interests have always recoiled. Slorc has renamed itself the State Peace and Development Association — but it does not make the slightest difference.

A devious destroyer

HOLIDAY-MAKERS cram the beaches of the Adriatic and Mediterranean enjoying the sun, and once again — 300km away in the interior of the continent — tens of thousands of frightened refugees are on the move. They flee artillery shells. They scramble for their tractors. They huddle in heat-soaked ravines without water or food. This is Europe in August, another battle in Slobodan Milosevic's brutal war against the 90 per cent of the population of Kosovo who happen to be Albanian. Using the advantage of the summer break, of media fatigue and President Clinton's notorious distractions, the Yugoslav leader is taking another calculated risk.

Saddam Hussein behaves much the same way with the United Nations weapons inspectors. A phase of reasonableness is followed by a deliberate ratcheting up of tension. The difference is that while the UN brings its biggest guns — diplomatic with a touch of military menace — to bear on Saddam, Mr Milosevic is under far less pressure. Although the humanitarian disaster he has caused in central Kosovo in the recent weeks is as massive as his attacks on western Kosovo in May, this time the outcry from the outside world is muted. Where is the tough talk of air-strikes which we heard last spring from Western leaders when the offensive around Decani was under way? Where are the crisis meetings of ministers? Where is the UN Security Council?

Mr Milosevic promised everyone he has met over the last two months, including President Yeltsin in Moscow, that he would withdraw his police forces to barracks. He asserted that the Yugoslav army was only there to protect Kosovo's borders. Yet there has been no withdrawal and the Yugoslav army is fully engaged. If it were merely one more case, in a 10-year catalogue of broken promises, of the Yugoslav leader being duplicitous, it would be bad enough. But there is a sneaking sense that the West's ill-considered policies have encouraged him. Anonymous Western officials whisper that they are "privately" pleased that the Kosovo Liberation Army (the military wing of the pro-independence movement) has suffered a defeat. Their views stem from a dangerous recent drift in Western policy which tends to equate the Serbian forces with the KLA.

Both sides, it is argued, have to be brought to the negotiating table. Both have to stop their military action. Obviously a ceasefire is required as soon as possible, but to put the issue in parallel terms is to forget the underlying truth that the KLA represents a majority community and that its tactics are primarily defensive, while the Serbs are trying to enforce the rule of an undemocratic minority regime by military means. There is no equivalence.

On the political front, the West has also been giving encouragement to Mr Milosevic by its constant insistence that there can be no independence for Kosovo. The Contact Group of five Western governments and Russia has been drafting, under British leadership, a range of possible autonomy options for the Serb-run province. Who would run the police? What sort of electoral system might there be? How can minority rights be guaranteed? All fine and good, except that it rules out the one thing — independence — which Mr Milosevic's brutal war has made the vast majority of Albanians desire. They want out from under the Serbian guns, not just now but for ever.

Unless the West changes the political thrust of its strategy and makes clear that it will no longer prejudge the future status of Kosovo, it will only produce what the cunning and deeply experienced Yugoslav leader is working towards. He wants us first to condone, and then with luck support his position. In this sun- and death-kissed August it is time to say no.

England's brief hour of glory

THERE IS something about the Headingley cricket ground at Leeds. In 1981 England beat Australia from an apparently hopeless position, thanks to Ian Botham's belligerence and Mike Brearley's brain; in 1991 Graham Gooch played the innings of his life to beat West Indies and end their decade of domination; and on Monday, in the nail-biting final act of an outstanding drama, England defeated South Africa to complete their first win in a full Test series for 12 years. After a summer of sporting disappointment, a nation rejoiced.

This week's win was not quite on a par with the heroics of Botham or Gooch — those were extraordinary performances that turned games which England looked destined to lose. But it was thrilling enough for people in homes and offices to suspend their normal business to follow the play. Darren Gough, the local hero, made sure they did not watch in vain. Non cricket-lovers will find the emotion that greeted the victory absurd. It's just a game; a game moreover that is played at a funereal pace and lasts the best part of a week. But ignore the cynics: cricket still has a place in the English soul. In 1981 Botham became an instant national hero; in 1991 Gooch's team was lauded in the House of Commons; Alec Stewart has no doubt just booked his knighthood.

After the débâcle at Lord's, English cricket was written off by the pundits: nobody watched it, cared about it, or even played it any more. The football juggernaut was destined to crush it. Last weekend, the soccer season, after the briefest of breaks, began in earnest: if England had lost, the obituary writers would have been hard at work. As it was, it was far too hot for football, and the sun shone brightest on English cricket. Now England head for Australia where, if the bookmakers are to be believed, their hopes will once more turn to ashes. If they do, the headline writers will round on this week's heroes and pronounce the game dead for the umpteenth time. The Ashes date back to England's shock defeat by the "Colonists" in 1882: it has been a long time dying.

War of words points the finger at Cairo

David Hirst

NO ONE has yet claimed responsibility for the twin atrocities of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and the range of possible candidates remains wide. But here in Cairo, the belief grows that the Egyptian Islamist underground organisation, Jihad, had a key role in it. It could have acted on its own. More likely, however, it did so as part of an "Islamist international" in which, historically, Egyptians have always figured prominently.

In the absence of formal claims, the evidence so far points most strongly in that direction. It is Egyptian groups, or individuals close to them who, alone, are coming forward with explanations for, or sympathetic comments on, the bombings.

London is the most prolific source. Their most consistent outlet is the highly serious and widely respected, pan-Arab newspaper, al-Hayat. This is published in London, but most of the news about Islamist activities comes under the byline of its Cairo correspondent, Muhammad Salah.

There has, in fact, been one lone claim — from a hitherto unknown group calling itself the Army for the Liberation of Islamic Holy Places. It was made to the Cairo correspondent by a caller "speaking in a non-Egyptian Arabic accent from outside Egypt". But hitherto unknown organisations of this kind tend to spring up like mushrooms, and it is clearly a cover for the real one.

One reason for believing that the real front is Egyptian — though probably in conjunction with the notorious Saudi militant Oussama bin Ladin — is the propaganda in which Egyptian terrorist groups indulge, as well as the debates which they conduct among themselves. These debates, often couched in the archaic idiom of Islamic theology, take place in obscure publications from Afghanistan to Europe. But they all find a wider audience through the pages of al-Hayat. And, of late, they have even begun appearing on the Internet.

One of the most heated controversies has been the question of whether it is legitimate for the Islamic underground to attack foreigners. November's Luxor massacre brought this one to a climax. That was carried out by the largest of Egypt's Islamic organisations, the Gama'a al-Islamiya, or Islamic Grouping. It caused a split between the internal (mostly imprisoned) leadership, who opposed it, and exiled leaders who were more inclined to justify it. The debate was tortuous and the arguments often highly casuistic. Last week, for example, one Gam'a leader, Muhammad al-Moqre'i, said that while the group does target the tourist industry, it will no longer attack tourists.

Another controversy has concerned the Americans. And no one who has been closely following this one could be particularly surprised at what happened in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam. It reached its apogee last February when it looked as though the United States and Britain were about to go to war against Iraq. That was the ostensible trigger for the founding of the so-called "Islamic Internati Front for Holy War against Jews a Crusaders" — militant terminolog for Israel and the (Christian) Wes Among the signatories were leader of the two Egyptian groups, Gama'aat al Islamiya, and th smaller but, if anything, even mor extreme Jihad-Ahmad Taha and Ayman al-Dhawahiri, respective Both of them currently reside Afghanistan. So does that other signatory, Oussama bin Ladin, th Saudi multi-millionaire who, in ad tion to running an organisation his own, finances the "Islamist int national" in general.

It was not for love of Saddam th this coalition came into being. F from it: his government was "apostate against the laws and reg lations of Islam" who "must b fought". Rather, it was out of hat for the US and its designs on Ir and its people that Muslims ever where were called to take a sta The newly formed front declar "The killing of Americans and th allies, military and civilian, is a r gious obligation for every Mus able to do so in any country wh that is possible, until the A Mosque is freed of their grip their armies leave the land of Isla

The Islamists were realising t anti-Americanism was about most popular cause they could pouse, perhaps the only one wi they and secular pan-Arabists co meet on common ground. For t what better authority than the m they call "despot and Pharoa President Mubarak himsel Mubarak said: "The Arabs angry because of the Israeli pr lem, nothing else. This is the pr lem . . . creating a hell of a hat which I don't like." It was certai far less repugnant to Egyptian p lic opinion than the slaughter non-American tourists. Ouss bin Ladin weighed in with a seri of warnings about impending tacks on the US; these would be "specific type" that requires "ex lent preparation".

IT WAS this front which, only days before the bombings in E Africa, warned the Americans a "message written in a langu they understood" was at hand. T official pretext was that the US collaborated with Egypt in secur the extradition from East Europe three of Jihad's leaders. Coming the wake of the propaganda and ternal debates, this warning m rank as strong evidence of Jihad involvement. Furthermore Nair and Dar es Salaam are reminisc of an earlier exploit of Jihad's blew up the Egyptian embassy in lamabad in November 1995. Th pretext: Pakistan's extradition wanted Egyptian militants.

In the wake of the carnage, t Egyptian militant, Ali Sirri, runs the Islamic Information Obs vatory in London, had no diffic in explaining the bombings. Ev thing that the US does, he t al-Hayat in Cairo, from the imp oning of Sheikh Omar Abdul R man (spiritual leader of the Gam to its endless vetoes on Isra behalf at the UN Security Cou made it the Great Satan with wh the Islamists were locked in pe nent combat.

Ali Sirri is under sentence death in Egypt.

E Timor 'will be free within three years'

José Ramos Horta, vice-president of the Timorese National Resistance Council, talks to **Bruno Philip** about his country's prospects for independence

WHAT'S your reaction to the offer by the Indonesian president, BJ Habibie, to grant autonomy to East Timor?

Unfortunately it's unacceptable as it stands, because it sets as a precondition the acceptance by the Timorese people of Indonesia's annexation of their country. The Timorese have had to put up with the arrogance and barbarity of the Indonesian regime for 23 years. They can't negotiate if they are forced to give up the very reason for their struggle — a refusal to accept Indonesia's annexation.

So I'm not expecting too much, given that the Jakarta government has not shown any genuine signs of good faith. The recent pullout of 400 troops was a derisory gesture, particularly as the government said they will be replaced by 800 other soldiers supposedly detailed to carry out health and education tasks.

Are you prepared to be more flexible about your demand for a referendum, which you say would result in a massive "yes vote" in favour of self-determination?

As Habibie views things, East Timor will not be allowed to control its foreign policy, defence or economy. So a very limited form of local autonomy seems on the cards. However, if Jakarta ceases to impose annexation on us, we'd be prepared to freeze our demand for a referendum for a period of five years.

We want to see troop numbers genuinely reduced, political prisoners freed, a United Nations peacekeeping force sent to East Timor, and an election organised so a territorial assembly can be set up with powers of decision on questions of law, security, economic development, fiscal legislation and the management of natural resources.

Indonesia claims an independent East Timor could not be viable, and would be politically unstable, notably because of fears that the civil war which broke out in 1975, just as the Portuguese were about to grant Timorese independence, might flare up again.

Indonesia is now virtually bankrupt and has had to appeal to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. So the Indonesian government can't teach us anything.

East Timor's economic viability is not a problem, if only because of our oil wealth. The size of our country matters little: there are currently 40 nations in the world with a land area and population equal to, or smaller than, East Timor's 285,000 square kilometres and 800,000 inhabitants.

As for the risk of civil war, it should be remembered it was Jakarta that encouraged the Timorese to fight among themselves. Here again, Indonesia can't teach us anything — historically, it has been a much less stable country than East Timor.

Horta: 'Jakarta must face the moral challenge of East Timor'

Doesn't the fall of Suharto mark a break with the past that could prove beneficial to East Timor?

I don't trust Habibie. He was too close to Suharto. The army, which was responsible for the massacres in East Timor, is still a powerful force. It's true things are changing. I'm aware of the difficulties facing the new leaders, and I recognise their efforts to introduce greater democracy.

But they urgently need to take various initiatives if they want to become more credible internationally. I think that Indonesia will face mounting problems and that within six months the government will no longer have the diplomatic, political and military means to be as inflexible as it is today, particularly over East Timor.

Do you feel you've never been so close to a solution to the East Timor problem?

The issue of East Timor is a moral challenge that the Jakarta regime must take up. The full scale of my country's tragedy is now beginning to dawn on the Indonesians. I'm convinced they'll one day ask themselves how they could have committed such acts of barbarity.

And while we're prepared to postpone the organisation of a referendum, the Indonesian government must realise that we'll never give ground on the principle of a referendum.

Three years ago, I said Suharto would be toppled this year, and I was right. Today I'm sure that within a maximum of three years East Timor will have regained its freedom.

(August 5)

US embargo long past its sell-by date

EDITORIAL

AS SO often happens in the United States, Hollywood has given the lead. A few days ago in Havana, a flamboyant rum-swigging and cigar-smoking Jack Nicholson said loud and clear what officials in the White House, State Department and Pentagon have been muttering under their breath: that it is high time the Americans lifted the embargo they imposed on Cuba 36 years ago.

Nicholson, a Democrat, was not a lone voice: a little earlier, Arthur Schwarzenegger, a dyed-in-the-wool Republican, had also visited Cuba — and said the same thing.

If proof were needed that the embargo has been a total failure — even from Washington's point of view — it was provided in spectacular fashion by Fidel Castro's week-long tour of the Caribbean, which ended on August 4.

Wherever he went, the Cuban dictator received a warm welcome. This was not because Cuba is seen by the islands he visited — Jamaica, Barbados and Grenada — as an economic and social model (though they may be jealous of Cuba's health and education systems), but because Castro was able once again to play one of his most successful roles — that of a victim of the US, in a region where people complain, often with good reason, about the interfering hand of Uncle Sam.

It is a role that still carries conviction not only in the Caribbean, but in the whole of South America where people find it harder than ever to understand the reasons for maintaining an embargo which was introduced at the height of the cold war and which should have disappeared along with it.

That is the most patent aspect of the embargo's failure. It has not isolated Castro politically — Pope John Paul visited him in January. Far from turning the *caudillo* into a pariah on the international scene, the embargo has only increased the stature of the man who dared defy the all-powerful US.

Not only is the embargo now meaningless from a diplomatic standpoint, but it can hardly be justified militarily any more. Cuba has long ceased to be the tiny pocket of Soviet influence in America's back yard. Indeed, in a report issued this year, the Pentagon itself opined that Cuba posed no military threat to the US or other countries in the region.

Lastly, the embargo is an economic monstrosity: it is seriously off target because it impacts principally the Cuban people, not the regime itself; and it is also stupid because it handicaps US companies in markets in which they compete with their European counterparts.

Washington states that it will lift the embargo only when the Cuban regime has become democratic. It is all very well to say that. The trouble is that the US enjoys excellent relations with many dictatorships throughout the world, from China to Saudi Arabia.

The truth is that lifting the embargo is a question of political courage. It would entail tackling something that has become one of the taboos of US public life: it would involve admitting that the Americans have continued to "punish" Castro purely out of spite because he dared to stand up to Washington, and it would mean ignoring an American-Cuban lobby whose power is waning by the day.

Even if it results in his being thwarted by Congress, which has a Republican majority, President Clinton owes it to himself to demonstrate that he possesses that kind of courage.

(August 5)



'After all, it's been a long time since Cuba ended its embargo against the United States'

Sri Lanka's war without end

Françoise Chipaux in Colombo

ON AUGUST 4 the Sri Lankan government extended the state of emergency to the whole of the country. The measure, which was already in force in the capital, Colombo, and in the north and east of Sri Lanka, where separatists belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have been waging a bloody struggle for independence, will probably result in the postponement of provincial elections which were due to take place on August 28.

Several ministers had publicly advocated putting off the poll because of the difficulty of withdrawing sufficient numbers of front-line troops to provide security.

Four years after Chandrika Kumaratunga became president with more than 62 per cent of the vote, her government seems more than ever caught in a cleft stick. She was elected on a peace platform, but her proposals were swiftly rejected by the LTTE.

She then launched a crackdown on the Tigers, while at the same time preparing a constitutional reform that would have turned Sri Lanka into a federation, thus giving the regions greater autonomy. Her main aim in doing so was to satisfy the demands of the Tamil minority. But the government has made little headway on either front. Now Kumaratunga seems to want to bring matters to a head, even if it means curtailing her presidential term.

The defence minister, General Anurraddha Ratwatte, who is her cousin and the most powerful member of the government, has often promised that he would crush the LTTE. But there is no sign that the war, still a serious burden on the economy, is likely to end.

Operation "Certain Victory", in May last year, aimed to open up 76km of "strategic" road between Vavuniya and Kilinochchi, thus linking the Jaffna peninsula, wrested back from the Tigers in December 1995, with the rest of the country.

The operation is still under way, but has become bogged down. The army has taken 15 months to advance 46km, at the cost of 1,600 dead and more than 12,500 wounded. The LTTE says it has lost 1,300 men. Casualties during the latest offensive, launched on May 28, have been so high (400-500 dead) that all news reports, even those filed by foreign correspondents, have been censored since June 5.

"This is an unwinnable war," says Harry Goonethileke, a former air force chief. "Even if the army opened up the road, how could it possibly keep it secure with such a drastic shortage of troops? It would require almost 500,000 men just to contain the LTTE in the jungle."

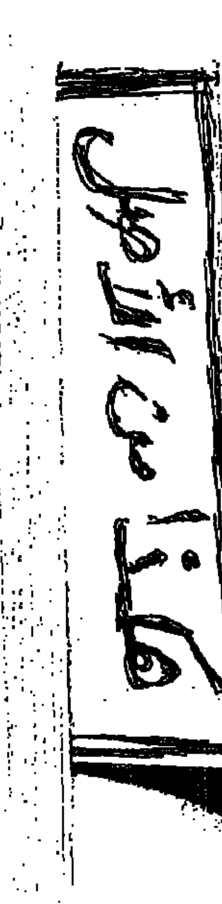
The Sri Lankan army is about 165,000 strong and, according to Goonethileke, has the highest desertion rate in the world. The six amnesties recently announced in favour of deserters had only a very limited success, and despite an unemployment rate of about 12 per cent, young men are in no hurry to enrol. "The only way to end the war is to negotiate," Goonethileke says.

Kumaratunga knows that. She said recently she was prepared to accept some form of mediation to reopen talks with the LTTE, as long as it gave up its claim to an independent state.

The devolution project, which cannot become law unless it is approved by two-thirds of parliament, has been rejected by the opposition. The government had planned to organise a referendum on the issue as a way of putting pressure on the opposition, but has now dropped the idea.

Kumaratunga has undoubtedly been doing her best to find some way of revitalising her country, paralysed by a 15-year war that has already claimed 50,000 lives. But so far she has little to show for her four years in office.

(August 6)



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 16 1998

Drama wins its place in the Salzburg sun

Olivier Schmitt in Salzburg

GERARD MORTIER, formerly head of the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, has been director of the Salzburg Festival for the past six years. With an annual budget of $50 million, which is more than any other European summer festival, Mortier's post carries a level of responsibility that would make lesser mortals feel jittery, particularly as Salzburg is a city not exactly renowned for its open-mindedness.

Yet Mortier has such confidence in his artistic policy that he has never wavered, not even on the numerous occasions that the German-language press has come down on him like a ton of bricks. With his suit, steel-rimmed glasses and piercing eyes, he may seem self-satisfied. But then he has good reason to be.

For one, he confides with a smile, in his six years at Salzburg he has managed to bring down the average age of festival-goers from 65 to 55. During his stint he has worked tirelessly to give the event, which was founded by Richard Strauss, Max Reinhardt and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, a more contemporary image.

He admits to having learned a lot: "Whether you're directing a theatre or a festival, you have to organise things according to the principles of dramatic art. You can't allow people to get it into their heads that our programmes are some kind of supermarket.

"This year we've tried to draw a parallel between the cities of Mahagonny [from the opera by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht] and Jerusalem, between materialism and spiritualism, between Utopias and ideologies (Stalinism in Katya Kabanova, and the Inquisition in Don Carlos).

"Next year, we'll question the two greatest mythologies of the modern era, Don Juan and Faust, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of European man since the Renaissance. Luca Ronconi, for example, will direct Don Giovanni."

One of the main planks of Mortier's policy has been to give back to drama its rightful place at Salzburg. This year, a total of 45,000 tickets have been sold for the festival's five plays (Robert Wilson's production of Danton's Death, by Georg Büchner; Jossi Wieler's Er Nicht Als Er, by Elfriede Jelinek *(reviewed below)*; Stefan Bachmann's Troilus And Cressida, by Shakespeare; Géométrie des Miracles, written and directed by Robert Lepage; and the annual revival of Everyman, by Hofmannsthal, directed by Gernot Friedel).

Tickets for plays account for almost a quarter of all bookings, with opera performances attracting 80,000 in total and concerts, 75,000. "The theatre's place in the festival programme is a major one," Mortier says. "The problem is that theatre people always feel a bit frustrated at Salzburg. They're rather jealous of opera and the more international kind of audiences it draws."

To counter that imbalance, Mortier put an exceptionally gifted director, Peter Stein, in charge of his first few theatrical seasons, and invited a lot of foreign productions.

"Because he was so well known, Stein brought us a wider public and extra prestige. When he left, we asked Ivan Nagel, who used to be an adviser on theatre programming, to succeed him — which he did eventually. But unfortunately he has had health problems, and although he's much better now he feels it's too onerous a job for him. He delved even deeper than Stein into our *Zeitgeist*.

"We'll now have to find someone with real stamina. Salzburg can be very gruelling — you're always having to protect yourself against all sorts of intrigues. Nagel has decided he wants to pursue his work as a playwright and writer. His contract ends in December. So I have had to do much of the programming for 1999 myself, and I'm now trying to clinch a deal with a leading German theatre director that will take us up to 2001."

Meanwhile next year's programme looks pretty appetising: "We're going to put on an adaptation of several Shakespeare plays, starting with Richard II, that was staged by Luc Perceval in Belgium. It's a show which, when performed in its entirety, lasts 12 hours! We're in discussion with Christoph Marthaler about his directing a classical play — possibly by Odön von Horvath. I've also invited a Faust show created by the Fura dels Baus in Barcelona.

"All these productions tie in with the theme of next year's programme, which will be common to all the plays as well as the operas we put on. And we'll invite a poet, just as we have Elfriede Jelinek this year."

The invitation extended to Jelinek, the Austrian writer loathed by the bourgeoisie of her country, was Mortier's latest act of provocation. He is never afraid to rub the Austrians up the wrong way.



Gérard Mortier showed courage in inviting Elfriede Jelinek (above), Austria's outspoken writer, to the bastion of cultural conservatism

"If I were scared of Salzburg, there'd be no point in my trying to do anything at all. Sometimes I feel a little like Parsifal: I'm unaware of danger. It's better that way. Jelinek told me she thought I was like ET. I said I found that a very apt comparison — I too sometimes yearn to be back home.

TRUE to the artistic credo he has followed for the past two decades, Mortier is still mainly interested in working with the most innovative artists of his time. He entrusts theatrical and operatic productions, as well as concerts, to leading members of the up-and-coming generation.

"I want drama, whether it is sung or spoken, to be served by directors who have a strong poetic fibre. That's why I tend to go for members of the new generation — that's perhaps the main difference between Salzburg and the Vienna Festival, which is now run by Luc Bondy.

"For me, Marthaler is the first dramatic poet to have appeared on the scene since Klaus Michael Grüber. He creates a very rich world of his own. I also appreciate people like Stephan Bachmann, Stéphane Braunschweig and Jossi Wieler.

"In addition I keep in touch with film-makers — this year Hal Hartley. Atom Egoyan was here a week ago. I'm negotiating with David Lynch, who is someone I dream of getting to come to Salzburg. I've just received a very modest and very anxious letter from him."

It is too soon to tell whether Mortier will renew his contract after 2001. He will take his decision at the end of next year, so in the event of him deciding to move on there can be a smooth transition: "I'll be 57 then. At that sort of age it's hard to lay yourself on the line, but it's the only way to remain original. Perhaps I'll only manage to do that if go somewhere else.

"It's the same for writers or composers — look at how Verdi set himself a challenge at the age of 56 by writing Don Carlos."

(August 4)

Inside the mind of Austria's bête noire

ELFRIEDE JELINEK, author of The Piano Teacher and Lust (Serpent's Tail, 1989 and 1992) and winner of this year's Büchner Prize, is "guest writer" at this year's Salzburg Festival, *writes Olivier Schmitt*.

It took a good dose of courage on the part of the festival's director, Gérard Mortier, and its head of theatre programmes, Ivan Nagel, to invite Austria's most controversial novelist and playwright to this bastion of cultural conservatism.

Leading actors, theatre directors and German-language playwrights have all been drawn to her work. Indeed a whole Sunday was taken up by an event daringly entitled A Journey Through Jelinek's Head, which comprised readings, showings of her favourite movies (chiefly horror films, of course) and stage productions.

These included the performance of a text she wrote as a tribute to the Swiss-German playwright, Robert Walser (1878-1956), whose love of word-play and determination to speak out, even when one is regarded as mad by the rest of the world, greatly influenced her.

The piece is called Er Nicht Als Er, which could be translated as "he not as he", though that does not render the pun on Walser in Als/Er. It is a brilliant four-page text written in the first person. It contains no stage directions, even though Jelinek calls it a play.

In the production staged at Salzburg by the young director Jossi Wieler — who turned out to be a revelation — the play became a dialogue among six people, three men and three women, or, more accurately, among four characters (two of the men do not say anything) — one man (Walser), who is cooped up in an asylum, and one woman, as the three female roles devised by Wieler actually boil down to one character, as in the Three Ladies in Mozart's The Magic Flute.

The action is set in a kind of non-place, which is located somewhere between a private space and a ward in a psychiatric hospital. Characters enter it through a forbidding steel cupboard and weave their way through a forest of broken-down armchairs left over from mediocre earlier lives.

Sometimes doors open in the walls, through which one glimpses a laundry that might have come straight out of a Christian Boltanski installation, or a music room haunted by a piano that can be seen in a play of mirrors.

It is an unreal, supernatural and immediately fascinating space, as crystalline as this short play, which succinctly expresses the pain of writing, living, representing and being on familiar terms with death.

(August 4)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 16 1998

Turandot comes home

Frédéric Bobin in Beijing

CLUMPS of weeds have sprouted on the yellow tiled roof of the Shrine of the Imperial Ancestors in Beijing. The purple paint on its wooden pillars is flaking in places.

Built in 1420 during the Ming dynasty, and burnt down and restored in 1798, the moth-eaten shrine gives off an aura of faded glory. But it can look forward to a thorough facelift for a production of Giacomo Puccini's opera, Turandot, which is due to be staged there from September 5-13.

It will be a high-profile event and, as such has drawn upon the energies of opera-lovers and tourist industry professionals for months. The dream cherished by so many conductors — of being able to perform Turandot in the Forbidden City, the setting intended by the composer himself — is about to materialise.

Turandot, the cruel Chinese princess who orders those of her suitors who fail to answer three riddles to be beheaded, will thus be reconciled with her country of origin. The project is the brainchild of the Indian-born conductor Zubin Mehta and the Chinese film director Zhang Yimou.

The whole operation will cost $15 million, and the organisers hope to recoup their costs by attracting 20,000 spectators, most of them foreign opera enthusiasts prepared to pay between $150 and $1,500 for a seat.

To avoid any risk of ruffling Chinese sensibilities, Yimou has decided to play down the less attractive side of Turandot's character. He will use warm, intense lighting, by way of contrast with the more sombre settings preferred by most directors of the opera, in an attempt to reconcile Turandot with her public.

This concern to make the *mise en-scène* as uncontentious as possible has failed to assuage the disgruntlement of a handful of Beijing intellectuals. Wang Chanzhi, a historian and member of the Academy of Social Sciences, is worried about the potential fire risk, which could have irreparable consequences for the national heritage.

Other critics have, less seriously, expressed concern at the infringement of intellectual property they detect in the use of the registered trademark "Forbidden City" in advertisements. The Shrine of Imperial Ancestors is in fact located in the Park of People's Culture, and not within the strict confines of the Forbidden City, which adjoins only its southeastern corner.

However specious they may be, such objections — which have been given wide coverage in the press — are symptomatic of a certain Chinese nationalism. They also reflect a new development: the willingness of the public to openly challenge official decisions. That, rather than what takes place on stage, could well prove to be the truly significant feature of the Beijing Turandot.

(July 31)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 16 1998

Terrorists Must Not Prevail, Says Clinton

Thomas W. Lippman

PRESIDENT Clinton has pledged that neither the lethal bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa last week, in which 12 Americans died, nor any other acts of terrorism, will cause the United States to retreat from its global responsibilities or shrink its official presence around the world.

"Americans are targets of terrorism, in part, because we act to advance peace and democracy and because we stand united against terrorism," Clinton said last Saturday in his radio address to the nation. "To change any of that, to pull our diplomats and troops from the world's trouble spots, to turn our backs on those taking risks for peace, to weaken our opposition to terrorism, that would give terrorism a victory it must and will not have."

Clinton's senior foreign policy and national security advisers — including Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI director Louis Freeh, who by law are responsible for investigating the crimes even though they occurred outside the United States — met at the White House to review the status of rescue operations and of the incipient investigation, administration officials said.

Most commentators focused on two prominent terrorism suspects who are based in Afghanistan and believed to be cooperating with each other.

One is Ayman Zawahri, whose name also has been transliterated as Iman Zowaheri, a leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization. His name tops a "Wanted: Masterminds of International Terrorism" list posted on the Egyptian government's official Web site.

Two widely read Arabic language newspapers published in London reported last week that the Egyptian Islamic Jihad vowed to strike at the United States for orchestrating the capture in Albania and extradition to Egypt of three Islamic militants connected to the ethnic Albanian separatist movement in the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia. Most of the ethnic Albanians who make up 90 percent of Kosovo's population are Muslim.

One of the three captured militants, Ahmed Ibrahim Najjar, is under sentence of death in Egypt for his alleged role in an earlier attack on Cairo's popular Khan el Khalili bazaar.

According to Edward V. Badolato, a private security consultant who was military attache at the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, Zawahri is a "running mate" of the other man most frequently named in speculation about suspects, Osama bin Laden.

According to the State Department, bin Laden has "close associations with the leaders of several Islamic terrorist groups," probably forged initially when he was helping militant Muslims from several countries fight the Soviet occupation of Aghanistan, and has financed their activities.

Opposition to U.S. military presence in Muslim countries was the motivation stated in a claim of responsibility for the bombings made by a previously unknown group calling itself "The Islamic Army for the Liberation of Holy Places."

The term "holy places" was understood as a reference in particular to Mecca and Medina, Saudi cities held sacred in Islam and visited by millions of pilgrims every year. In statements to a television station in Qatar, the group representatives described it as "Islamic holy warriors from all countries of the world," determined to drive U.S. troops out of Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries and resolved to "strike at American interests in all places until all its objectives are met."

Another theory about the bombings is that they were organized by hard-liners in Iran opposed to the moderate President Mohammed Khatemi and his tentative moves toward rapprochement with the United States. Iran, listed by the State Department as the biggest promoter of international terrorism, has not been associated with any major incidents since Khatemi's election in May 1997, but several of his opponents in the conservative religious establishment have warned that they would take action to reinforce Iran's longstanding enmity to Washington.

However, Iran condemned the bombings and called for international efforts to combat terrorism.



U.S. troops erect razor wire around the embassy in Dar-es-Salaam PHOTO: BRENNAN LINSLEY

Rescuers Left to Pick Up the Pieces

Karl Vick in Nairobi

THE EXPLOSION that tore into the U.S. Embassy and an adjacent office building here on Friday last week blew people right out of their shoes. There is a ladies' white flat in the median of Haile Selassie Avenue. A man's lace-up has been flattened face-down by traffic; "Saatosa Italian Fashion," the sole reads.

The intersection of Haile Selassie and Moi avenues was crowded with working people when the bomb exploded. Of the 200 or more confirmed dead, all but 12 are Kenyans.

"I'm looking for my dad," said David Kamau, his bloodshot eyes brimming with tears. He stood with his mother, Elizabeth, and five others from his family last Saturday at the gate to the U.S. Agency for International Development building, which the Americans are now using as their embassy. His father, Joel Kamau, had worked in the accounts department of the embassy for as long as David Kamau could remember. He was due to retire this year.

Accounts was on the embassy's second floor. "They are telling me he was on the side where it blew up," his son said. "They are saying that they cannot find him."

Downtown Nairobi, a gritty, noisy place even on weekends, was achingly quiet last Saturday. It was a quiet only partly accounted for by streets emptied of traffic by police diverting the flow away from a disaster zone. It was the kind of quiet people noticed in Oklahoma City following the bombing of the federal office building three years ago.

"We have never seen anything like this in Kenya," said Elizabeth Nyoroge. "We are peaceful people. We don't like violence."

Nyoroge heard the explosion, could not get near the building, then returned later, when the radio broadcast an appeal for people who know first aid. She was up all night pulling people from the wreckage.

"We slept here. We got six bodies out of that place," Nyoroge said. At one point her crew found a pocket of survivors. "They said, 'We are 12 girls and one man, and this is our names.'" But the concrete shifted, and all 13 were crushed.

At one point last Saturday, witnesses say, near the top of the heap that was once the Ufundi Cooperative Building, known locally as Ufundi House, an unidentified man was found in the rubble. Volunteers gathered around, lifted concrete, tugged. It looked as though he would be freed. Then he announced his own death: "Help me, help me. I have gone now."

By nightfall, the Israelis had arrived. They came with Homatro hydraulic pliers and Husqvanra saws, stretchers and dogs trained to sniff out flesh.

"Step back," said a man with a bullhorn, and the crowd obeyed, stepping over debris now mingled with litter from volunteers eating on the run. Shards of glass, an empty bottle of Kilimanjaro brand water, a rubber glove.

Nairobi is capital of a country that was long a British colony, and along with a certain regard for decorum the colonial legacy includes the custom of calling any public building a "house," even when it's a skyscraper. A block from the bombing, Extelcoms House, a telegram headquarters, was missing all its windows. The blast tore the red tiles off the roof of the Kenya Railways Headquarters, exposing the lattice of roofwork beneath.

But all eyes were on Ufundi House. "From this building in the last 24 hours we've pulled well over 120 people, but some of them were walking wounded," said David Tredrea. The director of the St. John Ambulance service was working in a biohazard suit that looked as if it was made of tinfoil.

Now, he said, the rescuers were down to finding people they could not see, only hear. At mid-afternoon they found a man behind a wall past the building's main entrance. They knew he was only 15 inches away; he had seen the tape measure extended through a hole in the wall toward him.

"Unfortunately, once we punched through that wall, all we saw was rubble," Tredrea said. "And the building started to rumble."

He looked at the rubble with eyes rimmed in red.

"A five-story building, and it's just sort of..."

He did not finish the sentence; just smacked the palm of one hand into the palm of another. Flat.

U.S. Backs Away From Force in Iraq

Barton Gellman and John M. Goshko

THE Clinton administration, which less than six months ago vowed a swift and sure resort to force if Iraq interfered with United Nations disarmament inspectors, backed away from that military threat last week in the face of fresh Iraqi defiance.

With Baghdad in open breach of a February 23 agreement that averted a large-scale attack on Iraq, President Clinton and his spokesmen unveiled a new approach that emphasized instead the maintenance of eight-year-old economic sanctions as their principal reply.

A senior national security policy maker said the United States reserves the option to launch air strikes "if we determine there is a threat that requires it." But the administration made clear that it saw no such threat in Iraq's declaration last week that it will halt nearly all weapons inspections and answer no further questions from the U.N. Special Commission charged with discovering and dismantling Iraqi programs to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Clinton, in a written statement, described the new Iraqi position as "unacceptable" and a "failure to live up to its obligations." But he made no reference to his government's several public pledges last winter, such as the one made March 3 by Assistant Secretary of State James P. Rubin, that "military force will ensue if Iraq violates this agreement."

Clinton said only that "the United States will stop any and all efforts" to ease the economic stranglehold placed on the Baghdad government after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The public statements followed a policy review last spring, undisclosed until now, in which Clinton's national security cabinet concluded that it could no longer back intrusive U.N. inspections with the threat or use of American military force — a centerpiece of U.S. containment efforts since the administration of President Bush.

The Security Council described Iraq's inspection halt as "totally unacceptable," but it said nothing about what it would do should Iraq fail to reverse itself. The last binding Security Council resolution, passed in March, threatened "severest consequences" for Iraqi breaches of the inspection agreement, which Rubin and others described then as "diplomatic code for military action."

The policy review accompanied the decision by top administration policy makers in June to withdraw most of the armada they assembled in and around the Persian Gulf during the winter crisis — from a peak of 32,800 troops and two aircraft carriers to 19,650 and one, at present the USS Abraham Lincoln.

The changing landscape addressed by the review included the faltering health of key Arab allies, Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and Jordan's King Hussein, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's open disapproval of further military threats against Iraq

Stinging Rebuke for Starr Over 'Leaks'

Peter Baker

A FEDERAL judge has ruled that "serious and repetitive" leaks to the news media in the Monica S. Lewinsky investigation justify an inquiry into whether prosecutors are responsible, and she accused independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr of once violating secrecy rules.

In a June 19 ruling unsealed on Friday last week, Chief U.S. District Judge Norma Holloway Johnson cited specific reports that appeared to come from Starr's office and said she was not persuaded by the independent counsel that his staff was not the source.

"The Court finds that the serious and repetitive nature of disclosures to the media of [grand jury] material strongly militates in favor of conducting a show-cause hearing," she wrote in ordering Starr to prove he had not broken rules barring prosecutors from revealing grand jury information.

An appeals court ruled last week that Johnson can proceed with her investigation into the matter but it restricted the ability of President Clinton's lawyers to participate, warning that the dispute could become "an unnecessary detraction from the main business of the grand jury's investigation."

While Johnson's order did not make a final determination that Starr improperly leaked, it represented a stinging rebuke from a judge who generally has sided with prosecutors through their investigation of the president. Johnson chided Starr for interpreting secrecy restrictions too narrowly and called a comment he made to a television crew about a sealed ruling "a violation of a court order not to discuss the ruling."

Last week Starr again denied providing reporters with grand jury information and pointed to witnesses and their lawyers as possible sources for news reports. "This office has not violated [secrecy rules] and we welcome the opportunity to demonstrate that fact to the District Court," Starr said.

Johnson's ruling was among a thick stack of court documents made public that provide the first glimpse of a furious, months-long legal battle waged by Clinton's attorneys to prove that Starr had overstepped his bounds. In pressing the leak allegations, the president's camp hopes to undermine Starr's investigation into whether Clinton committed perjury or obstruction of justice during the Paula Jones lawsuit by covering up an affair with Lewinsky.

Clinton advisers gleefully seized on the documents, calling Starr the first independent counsel investigated by a court for possible criminal wrongdoing in the course of his investigation. "The endemic and casual disclosures of grand jury information which have characterized the past seven months of the OIC's investigation are highly unprofessional and utterly indefensible," said Clinton attorney David E. Kendall.

Lewinsky, meanwhile, told a federal grand jury last week that she engaged in numerous sexual liaisons with Clinton at the White House, recanting her past statement in the Jones lawsuit and contradicting the president's sworn and televised denials, a source familiar with her testimony said.

The former White House intern, whose ties to Clinton now threaten his presidency, offered the jury the same account she previously provided Starr, a tale of an 18-month affair they tried to cover up, the source said. While Clinton never directly asked her to lie in the Jones case, Lewinsky told investigators they developed "cover stories" to hide their involvement.

Lewinsky appears to be done testifying, at least until Clinton answers questions from the White House on August 17 in a session that will be transmitted to the grand jury at the courthouse by closed-circuit television. Prosecutors could bring her back after that to address any conflicting statements by the president, legal experts said.

Compared with other central figures in Starr's investigation, Lewinsky had a strikingly brief visit with the grand jurors who had listened to her voice for months on the secretly recorded tapes and apparently were eager to hear her account delivered in person.

Clinton's friend Vernon E. Jordan Jr. and presidential secretary Betty Currie, both of whom helped arrange job interviews for Lewinsky, each testified five times. Linda R. Tripp, the former friend who made and gave to Starr the tapes that launched the investigation, spent eight full days before the grand jury.

But Starr's office was familiar with what Lewinsky would have to say, having spent most of eight days debriefing her in excruciating detail. Lewinsky resisted testifying until Starr gave her and her parents full immunity from prosecution in exchange for her cooperation.

Among other things, Lewinsky was asked about her dealings with Jordan and Currie and whether their assistance to her constituted an implicit trade-off for her denial of an affair in the Jones case. Jordan set up job interviews for her in New York and found her the lawyer who helped her draft the January 7 affidavit in which she denied having a relationship with the president. Currie accepted back the gifts Clinton had given Lewinsky that were subpoenaed by Jones's lawyers. Sources have said Lewinsky told prosecutors that Clinton suggested hypothetical ways to avoid turning over the gifts to the Jones team. However, she also reportedly said there was no explicit quid pro quo mentioned in relation to the job help.

As part of her immunity agreement, Lewinsky has given Starr telephone message recordings containing Clinton's voice, a photograph with his inscription on it and, most critically, a navy blue dress that is being tested by the FBI for evidence that could be linked to the president.

Fear Drove Workers To Fight GM

OPINION
E.J. Dionne Jr

EVEN in the middle of a long economic boom in which worker shortages are starting to drive up wages, people with good jobs are afraid of losing them. That's why autoworkers struck General Motors for almost two months, at the cost of about $1 billion in lost wages.

The company lost a lot, too — an estimated $2 billion. At the end of this costly struggle, GM agreed to keep certain plants open for a while and live up to promises to invest in them. The company got some productivity concessions. You could score this as a narrow victory for the union, or as an expensive tie that leaves the toughest issues for the future.

This strike did not capture the public imagination as last summer's United Parcel Service strike did, but the dispute hit close to home for many workers. In the new economy, even profitable companies are under relentless pressure to cut costs and promote efficiencies.

Such moves sometimes send jobs outside the country (a hot button issue for many workers) or, more often, to lower-cost, lower-paying producers elsewhere in the United States. Either way, the threat to existing jobs is felt keenly. Kim Moody, director of Labor Notes, a pro-union magazine based in Detroit, says the United Auto Workers leadership is "under tremendous pressure from below" to fight job losses. This is not a case of "labor bosses" flexing muscles, but of union leaders responding to worried members.

What's happening is a fundamental shift of power inside American companies — from managers to stockholders and Wall Street analysts who demand ever leaner, more productive corporations. When managers don't deliver, the company stock suffers.

Now let's stipulate: GM is competing against other car companies that have achieved some of the efficiencies GM now seeks. Ford and Chrysler, which have a history of better relations with the union and negotiated for efficiencies earlier, are seen by the stock analysts as having more of that lean look popular on The Street.

GM also confronts a fundamental conflict with the union over whose time horizon will prevail. As bank economists David L. Littman and William T. Wilson pointed out in The Detroit News in June, the average age of the UAW worker at GM "is approaching 50."

For many union members, who can retire after 30 years on the job, keeping a plant open even for just a few more years can make the difference between modest comfort and a huge disruption in their lives.

GM and the UAW were simply playing out a drama that is being enacted all across the country, often at nonunion companies. "People are simply fighting to hold on to what they have," said Andrew Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union. "These fights are not about massive wage increases. A good job with good benefits is a precious commodity in America today."

Californians Get a Lesson In English

William Booth in Los Angeles


A California teacher reads to her Hispanic pupils in English PHOTOGRAPH: DAMIAN DOVARGANES

THE SWEEPING social experiment known as bilingual education officially ended last week in the state where it began. Confusion reigned in many California school districts and defiance in others as teachers struggled to switch from Korean, Armenian and Spanish to all-English, all the time, often without the help of textbooks or lesson plans.

In Oakland and San Francisco, where schools do not open for another few weeks, officials were still holding out against implementation of Proposition 227, the voter initiative that passed with overwhelming support on June 2.

The initiative, sponsored by Silicon Valley software entrepreneur Ron Unz, replaced bilingual education with a year of English language immersion. Except in charter schools, students are then to be pushed into mainstream all-English classes.

The end of bilingual education in California, the largest state in the union and the one with the largest immigrant population, is being closely watched by other states also facing influxes of immigrant children. Reflecting resentment over the spreading challenge, a bill curtailing funding for bilingual education has been introduced in Congress. But in the meantime, the change began last week in Los Angeles.

In Maria Elena Crabb's first day with her new second-grade class at Alexandria Avenue Elementary School here, students who previously were taught almost exclusively in Spanish found their teacher introducing herself in English. As the children, in their new blue and white uniforms, sat squirming on the floor at her feet, Mrs. Crabb began reading from the storybook about little Madeline:

"In an old house in Paris that was covered with vines, lived 12 little girls in two straight lines."

Some of the children understood almost every word (vine was a tough one), and waved their hands in the air to answer questions. But others seemed lost and withdrawn. "You see those faces?" asked Crabb later. "Total blanks."

The termination of bilingual education has produced bitter feelings among many of its advocates, who believe that students are well served by first learning reading, writing and core subjects such as math and science in their primary languages, and then being "transitioned" into all-English classes after several years. Many bilingual activists have charged that Proposition 227 was racist and anti-immigrant.

But opponents of bilingual education describe it as a failed experiment that became bogged down, where students spent years learning Spanish and not English, the language immigrant children most need to succeed in. In California, only 7 percent of bilingual students made that elusive "transition" each year.

In Orange County south of here, school officials took advantage of a loophole and have delayed ending bilingual education, but only for several months. One panicky official in Santa Ana compared ending bilingual education to stopping a speeding train.

Maria Elena Crabb said the problem is not so much teaching her students English, but teaching them other subjects. In math, for example, she must first teach them the numbers in English, and then introduce concepts such as addition and subtraction, borrowing and carrying, all in English. "I think the smart kids will succeed, like anything else in life," Crabb said. "The ones who are slower? They might not get it."

On the first day of class, as the children sounded off their assigned numbered spaces in line, several could not utter the magic words in English. Crabb was not disheartened. She coaxed the numbers out of them, and when they spoke in Spanish, she simply repeated their words in English. Over and over and over again.

Random List of the 100 Best Novels

David Streitfeld on a publishing hype that left literary critics bemused

IF SOMEONE made a list of the most successful recent publicity gambits in book publishing, the Modern Library's ranking of the 100 best novels would be No. 1.

Alerted by voluminous media coverage, people have been arguing, agreeing, sneering and making counter-lists for weeks. Above all, lit lovers have been debating the fine points of the rankings.

Why, for instance, is Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, a famous novel but rarely thought of as a great one, all the way up at No. 5?

The 10 eminent Modern Library board members, the panel that supposedly put it there, don't have much of a clue.

"God knows," says historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

"I have no idea," says novelist William Styron.

"I didn't vote for it at all," says novelist A.S. Byatt.

"Don't ask me. I don't understand it myself," says historian Edmund Morris.

"I can't believe that even one of us thought Brave New World was one of the top five," says historian Shelby Foote.

For all of the criticism the list has received, it was never clear exactly how it was composed. It turns out that how the list was made explains much of the reason people are criticizing it.

Despite the Modern Library's assertion that the board "selected and ranked" these 100 works as the best 20th-century novels written in English, the members say they never ranked much of anything. The board members merely checked off books from a master list of 440 titles supplied by the classics publisher, without putting them in any particular order.

Executives at Random House, the publishing conglomerate that owns Modern Library, then tallied the number of judges who mentioned each book. (Several judges did not even mention 100 books.) The vast majority of books tied with many other titles — mentioned by four judges, say, or three. Judges were not asked to sort out these ties; instead, Random House brass took all the dead heats and turned them into rankings.

So when readers wonder how such eminent figures could possibly rank James Dickey's Deliverance (No. 42) ahead of both Vladimir Nabokov's Pale Fire (No. 53) and William Faulkner's Light In August (No. 54), the simple answer is: They didn't.

In interviews, the judges do not even agree on what they were ranking — the best-written books, or the most important, or the most influential. One judge acknowledges that he voted for books he has not actually read.

Says board chairman Christopher Cerf: "I don't consider this a scientific or even a valid process. I consider it a swell process. It's got everyone I know talking about books, and it's books they don't usually talk about. This has succeeded beyond our wildest dreams."

In a way, it's the huge success of the survey that is prompting some regrets among board members. "If I realized it was going to be taken so seriously, I would have encouraged [the Modern Library] to get all of us together" to hash out the choices in person, Styron says. "But I didn't furrow my head over this."

BYATT agrees : "It wouldn't matter so much if everyone wasn't taking it so seriously."

Interviews with the board answered some of the mysteries that have enveloped the list.

For instance, some commentators have decried the absence of Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward, Angel, generally thought of as a classic American work.

Wolfe, it turns out, wasn't even on the list of 440 possible titles, although there was room for 21 titles by Gore Vidal, a Random House author and one of the Modern Library board members. That's more than William Faulkner, Henry James and Joseph Conrad put together.

Despite this encouragement, no works by Vidal made it to the list of 100. Styron's Sophie's Choice made it in under the wire at No. 96 — without, the author says, any assistance from him.

Modern Library Managing Director Ian Jackman declines to be specific about how the voting was done, but says more than one vote was needed to make the final list.

Cerf, meanwhile, is honest enough to admit he voted for many books he hadn't read. "I voted for about 20 or 30 because I thought they belonged there based on reputation or influence."

The place where the poll went furthest afield from the board's intentions is, ironically, the part of the list that has received the most publicity — the top five books. In order, they were Ulysses, by James Joyce, The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man, also by Joyce, Lolita, by Nabokov, and Brave New World. Apparently all these titles were selected by nine out of 10 board members. The judges were then asked by the Modern Library to rank them in order from one to five. This was the only time the board did any actual ranking.

Thus was Huxley's 1932 tale of a misbegotten Utopia lifted from the depths to the heights, something none of them intended. If they had been ranking the books, board members say, they would have put Brave New World low on the list. Styron says he would have ranked it about 75.

A number of the judges say the same thing that happened with Brave New World boosted Portrait Of The Artist to No. 3. They hadn't liked it quite that much. "Personally, I'd have put Portrait in the low 30s," says Byatt. Schlesinger says the same.

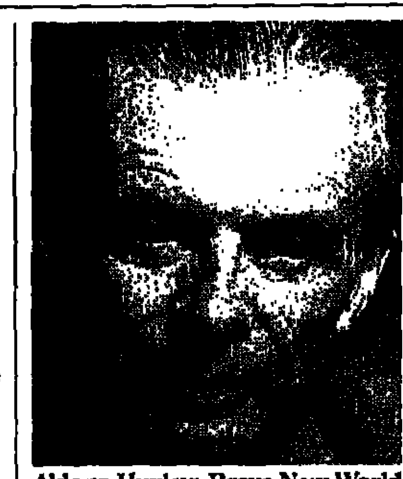
None of this would matter if the media hadn't seized on the list as a spark for a cultural debate. All of this has created action at the cash register, which was what former Random House chief Harold Evans intended when he came up with the idea. Evans dreamed big: He had wanted to negotiate cooperative ventures with other publishers to allow the Modern Library to issue every book on the list.

That idea never came to fruition, although the Modern Library is issuing 10 of the titles over the next year, in addition to the many it already has in print. Meanwhile, the inscrutable Ulysses has become, of all things, a bestseller.

Amazon.com, the online bookseller, says the list "sparked instant comeback" for some of the titles. Ulysses is No. 2 on its paperback bestseller list, while Brave New World is No. 7, Lolita No. 8 and The Great Gatsby No. 10.

For Cerf, son of the longtime publisher of Random House, that makes it all worthwhile. Sure, he says, "I think the process is to some degree a scam, but it's a good scam. I mean that in the best sense of the word.

"The statistics weren't valid, but if you had a list that was really diverse and incredibly thought out, it would cause less controversy," he says. "And then people wouldn't be talking about books."


Aldous Huxley: Brave New World is famous, but is it that great?

Voice of America: The Modern Library's '100 Best Novels'

1 **Ulysses** James Joyce
2 **The Great Gatsby** F Scott Fitzgerald
3 **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man** James Joyce
4 **Lolita** Vladimir Nabokov
5 **Brave New World** Aldous Huxley
6 **The Sound and the Fury** William Faulkner
7 **Catch-22** Joseph Heller
8 **Darkness at Noon** Arthur Koestler
9 **Sons and Lovers** D H Lawrence
10 **The Grapes of Wrath** John Steinbeck
11 **Under the Volcano** Malcolm Lowry
12 **The Way of All Flesh** Samuel Butler
13 **1984** George Orwell
14 **I, Claudius** Robert Graves
15 **To the Lighthouse** Virginia Woolf
16 **An American Tragedy** Theodore Dreiser
17 **The Heart is a Lonely Hunter** Carson McCullers
18 **Slaughterhouse-Five** Kurt Vonnegut
19 **Invisible Man** Ralph Ellison
20 **Native Son** Richard Wright
21 **Henderson the Rain King** Saul Bellow
22 **Appointment in Samarra** John O'Hara
23 **USA (trilogy)** John Dos Passos
24 **Winesburg, Ohio** Sherwood Anderson
25 **A Passage to India** E M Forster
26 **The Wings of the Dove** Henry James
27 **The Ambassadors** Henry James
28 **Tender is the Night** F Scott Fitzgerald
29 **The Studs Lonigan Trilogy** James T Farrell
30 **The Good Soldier** Ford Madox Ford
31 **Animal Farm** George Orwell
32 **The Golden Bowl** Henry James
33 **Sister Carrie** Theodore Dreiser
34 **A Handful of Dust** Evelyn Waugh
35 **As I Lay Dying** William Faulkner
36 **All the King's Men** Robert Penn Warren
37 **The Bridge of San Luis Rey** Thornton Wilder
38 **Howards End** E M Forster
39 **Go Tell it on the Mountain** James Baldwin
40 **The Heart of the Matter** Graham Greene
41 **Lord of the Flies** William Golding
42 **Deliverance** James Dickey
43 **A Dance to the Music of Time (series)** Anthony Powell
44 **Point Counter Point** Aldous Huxley
45 **The Sun Also Rises** Ernest Hemingway
46 **The Secret Agent** Joseph Conrad
47 **Nostromo** Joseph Conrad
48 **The Rainbow** D H Lawrence
49 **Women in Love** D H Lawrence
50 **Tropic of Cancer** Henry Miller
51 **The Naked and the Dead** Norman Mailer
52 **Portnoy's Complaint** Philip Roth
53 **Pale Fire** Vladimir Nabokov
54 **Light in August** William Faulkner
55 **On the Road** Jack Kerouac
56 **The Maltese Falcon** Dashiell Hammett
57 **Parade's End** Ford Madox Ford
58 **The Age of Innocence** Edith Wharton
59 **Zuleika Dobson** Max Beerbohm
60 **The Moviegoer** Walker Percy
61 **Death Comes for the Archbishop** Willa Cather
62 **From Here to Eternity** James Jones
63 **The Wapshot Chronicles** John Cheever
64 **The Catcher in the Rye** J D Salinger
65 **A Clockwork Orange** Anthony Burgess
66 **Of Human Bondage** W Somerset Maugham
67 **Heart of Darkness** Joseph Conrad
68 **Main Street** Sinclair Lewis
69 **The House of Mirth** Edith Wharton
70 **The Alexandria Quartet** Lawrence Durrell
71 **A High Wind in Jamaica** Richard Hughes
72 **A House for Mr Biswas** V S Naipaul
73 **The Day of the Locust** Nathanael West
74 **A Farewell to Arms** Ernest Hemingway
75 **Scoop** Evelyn Waugh
76 **The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie** Muriel Spark
77 **Finnegans Wake** James Joyce
78 **Kim** Rudyard Kipling
79 **A Room with a View** E M Forster
80 **Brideshead Revisited** Evelyn Waugh
81 **The Adventures of Augie March** Saul Bellow
82 **Angle of Repose** Wallace Stegner
83 **A Bend in the River** V S Naipaul
84 **The Death of the Heart** Elizabeth Bowen
85 **Lord Jim** Joseph Conrad
86 **Ragtime** E L Doctorow
87 **The Old Wives' Tale** Arnold Bennett
88 **The Call of the Wild** Jack London
89 **Loving** Henry Green
90 **Midnight's Children** Salman Rushdie
91 **Tobacco Road** Erskine Caldwell
92 **Ironweed** William Kennedy
93 **The Magus** John Fowles
94 **Wide Sargasso Sea** Jean Rhys
95 **Under the Net** Iris Murdoch
96 **Sophie's Choice** William Styron
97 **The Sheltering Sky** Paul Bowles
98 **The Postman Always Rings Twice** James M Cain
99 **The Ginger Man** J P Donleavy
100 **The Magnificent Ambersons** Booth Tarkington

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 16 1998

Memories of the Struggle

Pamela Constable

CROSSING BORDERS
By Rigoberta Menchu
Translated from the Spanish
by Ann Wright
Verso. 242 pp. $25

"I AM like a drop of water on a rock. After drip, drip, dripping in the same place, I begin to leave a mark, and I leave my mark in many people's hearts." This is how Rigoberta Menchu, the Mayan activist from Guatemala who won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1992, describes herself in her new book, Crossing Borders. Reading it, one appreciates the enormous patience that is required to prick the world's conscience about human rights — and that is also a principal virtue of the indigenous people Menchu represents.

For nearly 20 years, this small woman has waged an implacable protest campaign against repressive, racist practices in the Guatemalan highlands — practices that led to a vicious guerrilla war, the decimation of indigenous society, and the murders of Menchu's mother, father and brothers. Much of this she described, simply and shockingly, in her 1983 autobiography, I, Rigoberta Menchu.

Now, as a worldly, 38-year-old activist of international stature, she recounts her struggles against indifference and prejudice beyond Guatemala's borders, during years of travel and exile. Once again her story is told plainly, with a tone of serene determination. But this time there are flashes of sarcasm, undercurrents of bitterness, and a sense of retreat from the frustrations of modern politics to the ancient wisdom and rhythms of her tribal past.

At times Menchu has seemed almost like a caricature, insisting on wearing her traditional huipil blouse at diplomatic meetings, spouting leftist jargon and pestering anyone within earshot about death and injustice. Indeed, after the Guatemalan peace accords were signed in 1996, formally ending two decades of armed civil conflict, attention drifted from Menchu's cause.

But on April 26 of this year, it gained gruesome new relevance. Juan Jose Gerardi, the bishop of Guatemala City, was bludgeoned to death just two days after releasing a massive report on human rights violations during the civil war.

In the wake of this new shock, Crossing Borders bears thoughtful reading. It is not a perfectly argued work; Menchu often undercuts herself by lapsing into polemical hyperbole or romanticizing indigenous life (asserting that highland villagers would never pollute the earth or enjoy trash TV).

But Menchu's critiques of the modern bureaucrats and systems she discovered abroad are nakedly devastating. At the United Nations, where she wandered many a corridor in search of support, she found a "cold, cold place" whose inhabitants brushed her aside like an annoying "pet" and cared more about "softening clauses" in diplomatic documents than about the destruction of 400 villages in Guatemala.

And at one U.S. immigration checkpoint, she encountered a blustering, uniformed bully bent on intimidating her. By now, however, she had grown to relish such combat. "I told him I love coming up against people who abuse their authority," she said. "If he wanted to show me how it was done, I had all the time in the world."

To her credit, Menchu is equally critical, though more gentle in her scolding, of the jealousies and infighting among the "brothers and sisters" in her own movement. And her account of one harrowing incident, in which her own relatives were pressured into "kidnapping" her great-nephew — apparently in a plot to intimidate her — reveals how very close to home the politics of terror can come.

Her most revealing look, though, is at herself — a short, dark indigenous woman who would be dismissed as a nobody without her Nobel status. The farther Menchu journeys from Guatemala, a place she once thought the epitome of racism, the more she realizes how universal a problem it is, and the more defiantly proud she becomes.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Menchu's disappointing experiences abroad draw her back ever more deeply into her Mayan roots, and into an ancient culture based on seasonal rhythms, simple values and a mystical vision of harmony.

Menchu's innocence was destroyed very young — her father killed, her mother raped and murdered by soldiers, one brother tortured to death, another burned alive, two sisters joining the guerrillas. By the end of the book, when Menchu describes journeying back to her native village after many years' absence, it is clear that her ultimate quest is to re-create a highland paradise where no one is greedy or corrupt, time is meaningless and patience is inexhaustible. Even if such a pristine world never really existed, who can blame her?

Door to America

Peter Skerry

SOMEONE ELSE'S HOUSE
America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration
By Tamar Jacoby
Free Press. 614 pp. $30

THE UNMAKING OF AMERICANS
How Multiculturalism Has Undermined America's Assimilation Ethic
By John J. Miller
Free Press. 293 pp. $25

BETWEEN TWO NATIONS
The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City
By Michael Jones-Correa
Cornell. 237 pp. $45;
paperback, $17.95

JULY is celebrated as the month of national independence through much of the Americas — in Peru, Canada, Venezuela, Colombia, and of course the United States. This year our nation's considerable triumphs were much on display. But at the same time we would have done well to consider our singular travails — past, present and future. Foremost among these is the continuing dilemma of race in American life, which grows more complicated as we approach the millennium.

In Someone Else's House, Tamar Jacoby argues that our immigrant history has much to teach African Americans about the opportunities contemporary America offers — an argument that will, of course, provoke much debate.

I feel an affinity for Jacoby, who like me was among the handful of whites who ventured onto the Mall the day of Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March. A resolute spirit permeates this passionate volume. A journalist and senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Jacoby has done her homework. Her extensive research is supplemented by interviews with many of the key players in the black-white drama of the last 5 years in three major cities: New York, Detroit and Atlanta.

She draws useful connections between the battles over community control and today's Afrocentric activism in New York, and shows how those turbulent conflicts taught managers that "confrontation works."

But Jacoby's story gets better the farther it gets from New York. When she focuses on Atlanta, her reportorial skills dazzle. Here, her attention to detail lays bare the mechanisms by which mayors Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young strong-armed the local business community into affirmative-action efforts that, Jacoby argues persuasively, benefited a small elite but did not expand appreciably the pool of black entrepreneurs.

Against this backdrop, Jacoby bluntly asserts that many blacks face a "development gap" that must be overcome if America is to be a truly integrated society. She argues for "extensive acculturation — programs to change people's habits, their attitudes toward school, work, and the law" that will require blacks to follow the "immigrants' route — school, job, and entrepreneurship." Boldly she declares: "Affirmative action is a Band-Aid on the cancer of black underdevelopment." Her conclusions are tough, maybe even brutal. But also fair.

In the end, however, Jacoby's analysis does not hold up. While she rejects simple-minded notions of black self-help, the logic of her argument necessarily points to changes in the hearts and minds of black Americans. But how such internal change and "better leadership" will come about without the kind of group pride that collides with her integrationism, she does not say.

She does acknowledge a certain inevitability about ethnic pride: "Jews will be Jews, Italians Italians — and there is no reason blacks should be any different." But she stipulates that group pride must be excluded from the public realm. Aside from the difficulty of distinguishing between the private and the public, this ignores the fact that the "immigrants' route" she urges upon blacks typically involved significant public manifestations of group pride.

If Jacoby argues that black Americans should follow the "immigrants' route," John Miller, a political reporter for National Review, reminds us that this route ain't what it used to be. He is particularly troubled that today's immigrants encounter an America that is much less sure of itself than it was during the last great wave of immigration.

Miller offers a brief for "Americanization," by which he means a panoply of private and governmental programs to promote the assimilation of immigrants into the mainstream. For him, assimilation means Americanization. His dispute is with both the multiculturalists who decry assimilation and the restrictionists who insist that today's immigrants cannot or will not assimilate. His "Americanization manifesto" includes, among other proposals: eliminating bilingual education and bilingual ballots, ending affirmative action, denying welfare to noncitizens, reducing illegal immigration and raising the standards for naturalization.

One can agree, as I do, with several of Miller's specific recommendations but still not be persuaded by his overall argument. The Americanization movement that began as an effort to reach out to newcomers at the turn of the century was transformed during World War I into a coercive effort to weed out alien subversives. Miller recounts this history but fails to address the concerns of those who warn that a similar movement today might entail similar risks.

Like many pro-immigration conservatives, Miller makes a point of blaming not immigrants but our institutions and policies for problems with assimilation.

Because he favors sustained high levels of immigration as much as Americanization, Miller never considers the possibility that our institutions and policies might not be as easily altered as he wishes. If that is so, then we must either reconcile ourselves to the lessons our institutions are teaching newcomers or consider limiting current levels of immigration. Regrettably, Miller doesn't push his argument this far.

Michael Jones-Correa, an associate professor of government at Harvard, shares Miller's concerns that we are not paying enough attention to the kinds of citizens that immigrants are becoming. But in his study, based on 18 months of fieldwork among first-generation Colombian, Dominican, Ecuadoran, and other Latino immigrants in Queens, Jones-Correa comes to very different conclusions.

The book is a highly readable and insightful account of the obstacles to political participation experienced by such newcomers. Jones-Correa emphasizes that first-generation Latino immigrants have their own reasons not to get involved in politics. These include their general disaffection with politics based on experiences in Latin America, the persistent sentiment that their sojourn in the United States is temporary, and caution about making waves in an unfamiliar environment.

Intriguingly, Jones-Correa highlights how these dynamics play out differently among men and women. Male immigrants in Queens focus more on their homelands, in part because in New York they suffer sharp declines in status and prestige compared to what they have left behind. For females, by contrast, life in New York often means employment outside the home and newfound independence.

Focusing on naturalization, Jones-Correa makes a controversial and not entirely persuasive proposal that fuller participation in American political life would be facilitated if the United States acknowledged dual nationality, thereby alleviating Latino immigrants' concerns that to join the political community in the United States is to break definitively with their homeland.

It is a thoughtful study that provides excellent grounding for anyone thinking seriously about the contentious issues arising from today's immigration.

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North Sea oil revenue hits new low

Roger Cowe

NORTH Sea oil revenues fell to a new low last month as prices dropped to near-1960s' levels in real terms. The oil industry's problems were underlined by half-year figures from Shell showing profits down by two-fifths.

According to the Royal Bank of Scotland's oil index, cash revenues from North Sea fields were less than $29 million a day — the lowest for seven years. After allowing for inflation they were lower than ever recorded.

Stephen Boyle, the bank's head of business economics, said revenues were unlikely to rise in the short term despite higher output. Production in June was nearly 12 per cent higher than in the same month last year, but that increase was offset by lower prices, which were a third lower than last year in sterling terms. The dollar average in June was $12.12.

He pointed out that the oil price has been particularly depressed by excessive stocks caused by lower demand in Asia. But even when stock levels returned to more normal levels, Mr Boyle predicted that oil prices would remain depressed by recent standards.

"It is going to take some months for the stock position to unwind. Opec has managed to push through some very modest production cuts, which will mean by the end of the year stocks will begin to run down and prices will begin to pick up again. But the only thing that will move the price significantly is an almighty conflagration in Iraq," Mr Boyle said.

UK production is likely to continue rising, unless the oil price remains at the current unusually low level.

Shell blamed low oil prices for its slump in profits to $5.4 billion for the half year, 37 per cent below last year. British Petroleum also saw its half-year profit slump 24 per cent to $1.8 billion.

Shell director Steve Miller said demand for oil products in Asia had grown by 1 per cent a year over recent months. Before the regional slump, demand had been growing at 5 per cent.

Welfare reform hinges on a strong economy

COMMENT
Larry Elliot

APPARENTLY it's all Chris Smith's fault. Back in the days when he was shadow social security secretary, so the story goes, he said that Tony Blair had told him to go away and "think the unthinkable" — a soundbite he had actually coined himself while travelling to work on the bus.

Mr Blair is said to hate the phrase, presumably fearing that it may haunt him the way "Back to Basics" dogged John Major. Nevertheless the Government insists that despite the departure of Frank Field from the Department for Social Security (DSS), its enthusiasm for radical reform of welfare is undimmed, but it has yet to come up with a coherent and convincing strategy.

The truth is that no one should be surprised, let alone alarmed, that there is as yet no blueprint for reform of a welfare system that costs £100 billion ($160 billion) a year, that has developed in byzantine ways over the past 50 years and is now a tangle of complexities and contradictions.

Welfare reform is not necessarily stillborn, but there are three ways of going about the task, and the Government needs to be clear which path it is following.

One method is to improve work incentives. This is really what the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, and the former DSS Secretary, Harriet Harman, were trying to do with the New Deal and the counselling sessions for single parents. Taking people off benefits and putting them into work means that money can be moved from passive spending on welfare to active spending on health and education.

Part of the Government's armoury for sharpening incentives is to make benefits less generous or harder to get. As such, the work-based approach is consistent with saving money. This is the second way in which reform of the welfare state can be tackled, and some of the Government's comments suggest that "eliminating the price of economic failure" is at the heart of official thinking.

Finally, welfare reform can be used to alleviate poverty. This has also featured strongly over the past 15 months, not just in the creation of the Social Exclusion Unit inside Downing Street and the Cabinet committee on welfare reform but in the quiet redistribution under way since the election.

But here's where the problems start. While it is perfectly possible to combine any two of these approaches, it's impossible to have all three. For example, one way to tackle poverty without harming work incentives would be to scrap means-testing and make benefits universal. But this would cost money, not save it.

Faced with this dilemma, the Government should look to its own core values and conclude that, for a centre-left party, tackling poverty and improving work incentives take precedence over saving money. In any case, once the social security budget is disaggregated, it rapidly becomes apparent that only a very small part of the annual bill has anything to do with economic failure, and thus lends itself to savings.

Almost half — 44 per cent — goes to the elderly, who presumably are not considered to have failed simply by getting old. A quarter goes to the sick and disabled, and 19 per cent goes to supporting families. Are people to be considered failures because they have fallen ill, or have been abandoned by their partners? If not, the Government is left merely with the 6 per cent of the welfare budget that goes to the unemployed.

Taken to extremes, a cost-based approach to welfare reform would be as hard-nosed as management consultancy: the so-called hyena approach in which those not fit enough to keep up with the rest of the herd are picked off. It might be asked why the Government is not exploring the possibility of introducing euthanasia for the terminally sick elderly. There is, of course, absolutely no question of the Government doing any such thing. Why? Because welfare reform is not just about cost, it is about decency and morality.

Once this is acknowledged, saving money can be put in its proper context — as a legitimate objective of welfare reform, but a secondary aim. It then leaves the Government free to get on with ensuring that people have jobs and that decent provision is made for those unable to fend for themselves.

These were the basic building blocks of the original Beveridge blueprint for welfare, in which the implicit social democratic bargain was that the government should create the working conditions in which individuals could look after their children but that the state would have the responsibility of caring for the old, the sick and the unfortunate. Given Labour's emphasis on rights and responsibilities, it is still a bargain that has resonance today.

There is nothing sinister about the gradual extension of means-testing over the past year. On the contrary, it has been the result of the Government's determination to move resources to people who really need them — hard-up pensioners and the working poor. Moreover it is a perfectly legitimate argument that left-of-centre parties should not be doling out benefits to millionaires but should be concentrating on the needy.

BUT there are serious long-term risks involved with this strategy. Although the short-term impact may be to persuade taxpayers that their money is not being squandered, in the longer run it will almost certainly lead to a voters' revolt. Ultimately, universality is a way of recognising that individual selfishness exists but can be harnessed for a greater good. The middle classes will only pay their taxes to fund the welfare state if they know that they stand to get something out of the system.

So, for all its faults, universality has to stay. Additional means-testing may be the answer to immediate problems but over the longer run it is not the solution. Mr Field is right, for example, to point out that the minimum guarantee to pensioners makes it inevitable that the Government will have to make second pensions compulsory. Otherwise, there would be no incentive for people to save, because they could assume that the Government would always step in to support them. Unfortunately, those likely to be forced to take out second pensions are those in low-paid insecure jobs — the very people the Working Families Tax Credit is designed to help.

Does this mean that there can be no reform of welfare? Not necessarily. But it does mean that to be workable changes will be modest and piecemeal rather than Big Bang. Britain's welfare state is not ballooning out of control, and is not generous by international standards. Some benefits — particularly to pensioners — are too low rather than too high. It may also mean that the Treasury takes responsibility for welfare reform. Not through a takeover of the DSS — which would be disastrous and simply hasten the triumph of means-testing — but by getting the economy right. First, by delivering strong growth and higher levels of prosperity; second, by reducing income inequality.

Mr Brown is convinced that his radical reforms of the economy raise the trend rate of growth and boost employment. If he is right there will be no need for radical surgery on the welfare state. In the end, it's as simple as that. In the end, the soundbite that matters is not "thinking the unthinkable" but the oldest and hoariest of the lot: "It's the economy, stupid!"

In Brief

WALL Street stepped back from the brink after the Dow Jones plunged almost 300 points, the third worst fall in its history. The drop, which had a knock-on effect on the City of London, was prompted by renewed concerns over declining profits and the Asian crisis.

THE decline of the yen and Tokyo stocks accelerated amid increased concern about the government's ability to clean up the banking system and news that another major company, Mita Industrial, had failed.

INTEREST rates appeared to have peaked in Britain after the Bank of England left them unchanged following concern about the economy. The manufacturing sector shrank in July at its fastest rate since the last depths of the last recession, in 1992.

THE share price of Pearson, owner of Penguin Books, reached a record high after it posted stronger than expected profits. Pearson is headed by the only woman chief executive of a leading British company, Marjorie Scardino.

THE European Commission said that British Airways should give up, rather than sell, its take-off and landing slots at Heathrow and Gatwick under the terms to be imposed on BA as the price of approving its alliance with American Airlines.

LOW-cost no-frills airlines release too few tickets at their advertised rock-bottom prices, according to the air passengers' watchdog, which recommends 25 per cent be guaranteed at the headline price.

THE Automobile Association is to close its high street shops and abandon its own-brand insurance in order to concentrate on its roadside breakdown service.

HOUSEHOLD appliances that fail because of the millennium bug will not be covered by insurance, the Association of British Insurers warned.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates August 10	Sterling rates August 3
Australia	2.7258-2.7321	2.6963-2.6998
Austria	20.72-20.74	20.39-20.40
Belgium	59.81-59.90	59.74-59.84
Canada	2.4756-2.4778	2.4590-2.4610
Denmark	11.05-11.06	11.04-11.05
France	9.732-9.743	9.71-9.72
Germany	2.9029-2.9055	2.8903-2.9005
Hong Kong	12.63-12.64	12.58-12.59
Ireland	1.1540-1.1563	1.1556-1.1585
Italy	2,864-2,866	2,859-2,861
Japan	239.01-239.22	238.65-238.93
Netherlands	3.2733-3.2766	3.2675-3.2708
New Zealand	3.2085-3.2147	3.1884-3.1944
Norway	12.39-12.40	12.33-12.36
Portugal	296.86-297.19	296.63-296.92
Spain	246.32-246.57	246.07-246.36
Sweden	13.18-13.20	12.96-12.99
Switzerland	2.4378-2.4406	2.4376-2.4402
USA	1.6315-1.6324	1.6245-1.6253
ECU	1.4722-1.4740	1.4713-1.4729

FTSE100 Share Index down 222.1 at 5587.6. FTSE 250

Why on earth, asks visiting professor **Peter Owens**, is Britain remodelling its higher education system on the demoralised mess that is the US system?

Learning the hard way

THE BRITISH government's decision to introduce tuition fees and eliminate maintenance grants for students appears on the surface to be a sensible decision. It sees this system working in the United States and hopes to borrow a few market-oriented, cost-saving elements from the American model, trusting the English faith in self-restraint and good sense to avoid the excesses and failures.

But the US higher education system, while seemingly healthy from a bureaucratic bean-counter's perspective, is actually a demoralised mess, almost brought to its knees by the "user pays" doctrine. It imposes crushing debt on students and their families and has gradually shifted the costs of higher education into the pocket books of a relatively small segment of the US population and their bankers, in the form of an enormous mortgage penalty.

Harvard, Yale and Stanford may be stunningly effective universities for a minuscule number of students in the US and around the world. But the darker underbelly of higher education in the US, the system that provides for the overwhelming majority of students and fuels the intellectual growth of the nation, struggles at its task in ways that should frighten British citizens considerably.

By concentrating so huge a burden of higher educational costs on those who attend university, a minority of US citizens are shouldering what ought to be a national public responsibility.

The vast majority of students in partially subsidised state universities (the US's least expensive) must labour for 15 to 20 hours a week in menial jobs. Often these jobs are at night, because students' days are consumed by classes. Students come to class bleary-eyed, exhausted and often ill-prepared. But these jobs cover only a small fraction of expenses. The bulk of tuition costs, fees, room and board are covered by student loans — a steadily growing debt burden that accumulates over the minimum of four years required for Americans to earn their bachelor's degrees.

While much is said in British publications about the fact that more than 50 per cent of Americans attend colleges or universities, only 25 per cent of Americans end up earning their bachelors' degrees. Half who begin do not finish, in large measure because higher education is so expensive, so burdensome and so depressingly difficult. It is commonplace that students from middle-class families graduate with loans exceeding $50,000. During their first years in the workforce, when their salaries are lowest, they must begin paying back huge loans.

Their parents are frequently forced to participate in helping to pay these debts. Often, these cash-strapped graduates are forced to live at home, thus reducing their mobility, and their opportunities for better work and better pay. To calculate for students attending private universities, simply double or in some cases triple these costs.

While statistics in the US indicate that higher education will eventually more than compensate for these debts, the turning point is rarely achieved before students are well into their 30s and parents in their 60s.

The British government is confident it can avoid embarking on any such folly. But don't count on it.

The cost-sharing philosophy of higher education offers governments a commodity they can seldom handle prudently: money. Additional increases in fees become temptingly easy to pass along to students as MPs realise higher education subsidies represent a huge pool of political capital that can be spent elsewhere. Stern new phrases emerge such as: "These fees are really but a fraction of real costs." Soon, universities become increasingly privatised and chronically underfunded. Staff-student ratios worsen. Library budgets are reduced, salaries cut, retiring tutors are not replaced.

Reduced numbers of academic staff translate into fewer modules being taught, less choice for students, and additional years spent scrabbling together the required classes for graduation. Their investment reduced, MPs at first lose interest and then turn resentful as their stepchild stumbles and begs for help.

Making the grade ... but 50 per cent of American students never finish their course

The British money-crunchers may think they can split this log for a warmer fire. But I can tell you from the front line, as a parent who has paid for one five-year bachelor's degree and is soon to embark on another child's fifth year, the price is very high. And as a professor on the front line, teaching bleary-eyed, justifiably resentful students, there will be no rest for the weary. Somebody has to pay that $50,000 in debt, and it's going to be the student, Mum and Dad.

The real picture of US families is a far cry from the prevailing myth of waste, leisure, and slobbering materialism so fondly trumpeted by the British media in fostering its fantasy of a nation swimming in credit card self-indulgence. In fact, many students and parents in the US use credit cards to pay their tuition bills after exhausting every other financial source.

It is a distinct pleasure for me, visiting and teaching in Britain, to stride into a classroom here to be greeted by fresh, rested faces and alert minds. American students all have bags under their glazed eyes, and there are days when we all leave looking the same as we entered, discouraged by the prospects of yet more work piled upon more work piled upon jobs, all of it dwarfed by the magnitude of the debt that will follow. The corrosive effects of such staggering costs, spread across so huge a population, contribute to a deep and seething anger and mistrust of government which British leaders would be wise to avoid.

Peter Owens, professor in the Professional Writing programme at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, is visiting Nottingham Trent University

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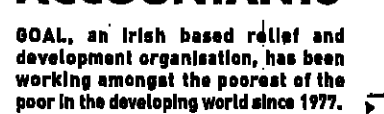
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Women must face their attackers

Rape victims should not receive special rights in court, says **Dea Birkett**

LET'S NOT mince words. Non-consensual penetration of the vagina by the penis — rape — is a very serious crime. It is traumatic, demeaning, and, by definition, violent. And accusing someone of such a crime is itself very serious, sometimes leading to a life sentence in the isolation of a special wing for sex offenders. The role of the court in such a case is to establish the facts as fairly as possible. When such an accusation is raised, for the sake of both sides, justice must be done.

But the British Home Secretary, Jack Straw, believes that justice is not the only thing to be considered in rape trials. Uniquely for a court case, he thinks the trauma suffered by the complainant during the process of the trial should be taken into account. And with this in mind, he proposes that an exception to the established right of a defendant to defend themselves should be made for those accused of rape. They must not be allowed to cross-examine the complainant.

These proposals to silence the accused are contained in a report entitled — with no apparent sense of irony — Speaking Up For Justice.

Earlier this month the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, dared to suggest that the effect of such measures might be quite the reverse of that which the Home Secretary intended. He suggested that if defendants were not allowed to question their accusers, jurors might feel they'd been denied a fair trial, and simply acquit. I would be one of those jurors. I believe the removal of this right is both damaging to the criminal justice system and an insult to women.

It was an extraordinary and remarkably resilient woman who brought this issue to the attention of government. In 1996, at London's Old Bailey, Julia Mason was subjected to six days of questioning by the man accused of raping her, Ralston Edwards. Edwards made Mason describe his genitals in graphic detail. Mason waived her right to anonymity in order to draw attention to the horror she was experiencing inside the courtroom, and campaigned for the law to be changed. Her summary of the trial was captured in a soundbite still used by campaigners today: "Why did they let him rape me again?"

But it is essential for any criminal case that the facts are trawled over and over and over. The jury must be informed. Their decision must be reached with the knowledge that there has been nothing left unsaid, no stone unturned. In a recent murder trial I attended, the horrific details of the case were repeated several times throughout the trial. The video of the murdered girl's mutilated body was shown twice in open court, the second time at the request of the jury. A reconstruction of the frenzied attack on her was staged using the actual weapon — a foot-long metal tent-spike that was rained down so hard on her skull that it bent.

Imagine the pain of the family of the murdered girl watching this played out before them. In this case, they were not called to the witness box. But in a similar case, they could well have been. Should they, and the jury, be spared the full details of this case because of the distress it might cause them? Of course not. They needed to know this in order to reach a verdict. The accused was found guilty of murder.

So why this exception with women complainants in rape trials? The presumption must be that women are more vulnerable than male witnesses. Women are too feeble to stand up to the adversarial process. And women who have been raped are particularly feeble, too pathetic to face their alleged attacker. By implication, they are unable to tell the truth about their experiences without breaking down. These very same proposals that are intended to give women dignity treat them as if they were lesser citizens.

Speaking Up For Justice also considers live video links and screens for women accusing rape — identical to special legal processes advocated for under-age witnesses. The new proposals see women as child-like — incapable, vulnerable, needing guidance.

The picture is painted of damaged, blubbering women being pitched against hardened rapists. Rapists shouldn't have rights. But the man in the dock who may question them is not a rapist; he is just accused of being one. This is so obvious that it ought not to have to be stated, but in the current climate unfortunately it does — he is innocent until proven otherwise. Not until after the jury has pronounced its verdict is the accused guilty of any crime. And, as innocent men, they have a right to dismiss a lawyer they find inadequate. They have a right to defend themselves.

THE unarticulated assumption lurking behind all these debates is that rape is something women simply never lie about. Once a woman has pointed her finger at him, the man in the dock is certainly guilty. But, unfortunately, women can and do lie. Sara Hinchliffe of Feminists For Justice, admits: "There are very good reasons why they do, which most of us can identify with. It's a very good way of being malicious to somebody and getting revenge. If we say that every woman who alleges rape is telling the truth, every acquittal is a criminal going free."

Eleven thousand men in England and Wales were prosecuted for rape in the year that Ralston Edwards's trial hit the headlines. Cross-examination of the complainant happened in just a handful of these. And it is no accident that the case matches most women's nightmares — the shifty man in a darkened street. Mason was approached by Edwards, a stranger, while standing at a bus stop; he bundled her into an alley-way.

But this case no more represents a standard incident of rape than child murder by a stranger does of child sexual abuse; most rapes are not by strangers, but by people we know, usually very well. The defence of those accused of rape is a subject that is almost impossible to approach rationally. And, as a result, there is little alternative thinking. Like the treatment of child sex offenders, it is an issue around which both the liberal and conservative snuggle up together in the same camp. We all agree rape is wrong. And therefore, the argument goes, defending the rights of a man accused of rape is wrong. It is seen as tantamount to defending, even denying, the rape itself.

I hope Lord Bingham is right. I hope that juries — representatives of the people — see through this swamp of emotion. I hope they demand the facts, upon which they can form sound judgments as to what really happened. In Mason's case, it seems justice was, after all, done. Edwards was given two life sentences. Let the accused and the complainant both have their day in court. Then let the jury decide.

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Letter from southern Sudan Samantha Dobson

Hungry for life

ALERAT Mayong doesn't know for sure, but distant relations think she's about eight. Age should be a simple question, but her emaciated body, ravaged by starvation, makes it hard to tell.

Alerat is an orphan, her mother — the last family member alive to clock up the famine tolls — died several days ago. Shrivelled to the skeleton thinness which again haunts distant television screens, Alerat began walking, hunger biting at her heels. Wrapped in rags and despair, she strode along the track hundreds of other feet suffering the same fate had turned to dust.

She collapsed at the entrance of the Ajiep feeding centre, under the feeble shade of a thorn tree. But it was too late. In the pounding 50-degree heat, she died. In bitter irony she was buried in an empty sack of grain. The trouble is, it's difficult to distinguish Alerat from the hundreds of other people starving in Sudan's latest treadmill of suffering.

The feeding centre is bursting at the seams and aid officials are working around the clock to keep the close to 2,000 official famine victims alive. The precious few supplies are dwindling fast, forcing the hungry to be turned away by the hundreds. With nowhere left to go they huddle under the searing sun in unnerving silence. Some vomit precious last moisture from their weak bodies, others, debilitated by diarrhoea, scrape the stenching expulsion from themselves and on to the baking ground. A near-starved child sends a haunting wail over the forlorn crowd. And so it goes on in Sudan's cycle of starvation, day after day, week after week.

If you size up Sudan, it is balancing right on the edge of the humanitarian charts. And it took more than just bad luck for the country to end up at the bottom of the global development class — Sudan didn't arrive there without some effort on the part of its leadership.

Since 1983, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army has been at war with the military-backed government. The seemingly never-ending struggle for independence is exacerbated by northern fundamental Islam beliefs clashing with the Christian animists of the south. Running into its 15th year, the war has so far claimed the lives of countless innocent civilians. This year's famine alone threatens the lives of an estimated 2 million.

Akat Madut and her son Amou are one of Ajiep's rare success stories. A mother of five, Akat is slowly learning to bow to the hierarchy of death. When donated emergency rations are not enough to save the whole family, who gets fed? When her family is debilitated by hunger but relief supplies are a four-day walk away, who goes?

Akat is one of the many faced with such impossible choices. Her husband was killed in March in an attack on their village. Her eldest daughter was kidnapped — perhaps taken to Khartoum to become a "wife" to her Muslim captor, or perhaps forced to serve as a concubine for the army.

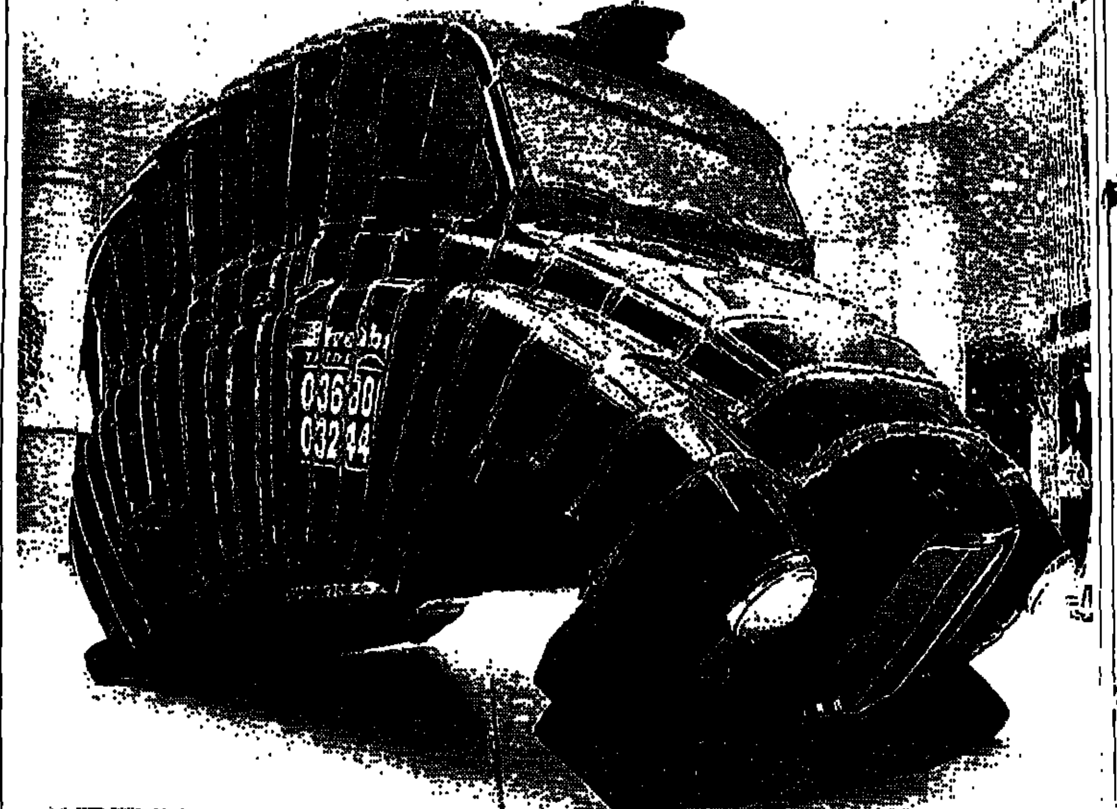
Akat is desperate to keep what is left of her family alive. Seeds donated to her family — intended for next season's harvest — have been eaten even before they had a chance to be planted. She has been forced to exhaust all traditionally known survival strategies — her days have been spent stripping semi-edible leaves and berries and excavating ant hills for the cup or so of grain and seeds the insects gather for their own use.

In desperation, Akat was forced to abandon her home and begin the journey to the feeding centre in Ajiep. Her youngest son, strapped in a bundle of rags on his sick mother's back, did not survive. At death he was only 2.9kg — half of his normal body weight, a tiny child you could cup in one hand. At more than one year old he weighed less than he did when he was born.

Now Akat must concentrate on keeping her only remaining son alive. In the comfort of his mother's lap, Amou sips on a high-energy porridge formula from a hollowed gourd.

One of the lucky ones, indeed.

This article is one of a series of "letters" from readers. Writers are invited to submit articles of no more than 800 words (see address on page 2). Please enclose a self-addressed envelope if you wish your manuscript to be returned



Art imitates loaf . . . A London black cab, sliced up by Bristol artist Peter Mountain and reassembled with a difference, is turning heads at a shopping centre in Swindon, Wiltshire, where the theme of the town's annual festival is architecture, streets and spaces PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID MORRIS

A Country Diary

J M Thompson

CHESHIRE: August sees the start of the autumn migration by those birds that have been with us since the spring. This year's families have been raised and reached independence, so young and old alike now must head south to winter feeding grounds.

Many, like the warblers, whitethroats and hirundines, will need to make the hazardous journey to the southern half of Africa, having to negotiate the vast Sahara desert region on the way. The two chiffchaffs in the northern woods stopped singing at the end of last month, a sign that they have probably moved out, but they won't have as far to go, being able to find all they need for the winter around the Mediterranean or North Africa. They may even decide to join the small number of their breed who stay with us to brave a British winter.

The village swifts are still with us, performing their late evening acrobatics over the roof tops. I've watched them on a number of evenings lately, all three families, including this year's offspring, joining together in screaming sorties which eventually end with them gaining height in a spiralling circle until they disappear from view to spend the night sleeping on the wing.

Each year as I watch these birds, I am reminded of what lies ahead for the young ones — straight from the nest they have to fly to South Africa; the next two years may then be spent non-stop on the wing, and during their average life span of, say, 10 years they are likely to cover well over a million miles.

This departure of our summer migrants is a leisurely affair which will last into October; by which time the wild geese and winter thrushes will have begun to arrive from the Arctic and eastern Europe.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IS THERE any scientific evidence of ghosts?

THERE is as much scientific evidence to support the existence of ghosts as there is for black holes: pictures purporting to be of what are called black holes/ghosts exist; black holes/ghosts are claimed to have been seen by a small group of people; black holes/ghosts have effects on their surrounding environment (things flying through space, power drains and surges, changes in temperature); no one has managed to capture or create a black hole/ghost for laboratory study, or indeed at all; the cause of the perceived presence of black holes/ghosts is subject to many theories, each claiming to be correct. On the other hand, is there any supernatural evidence for the existence of scientists? — *Malcolm Minchin, Wokingham, Berkshire*

WITHIN the last few weeks, Vic Tandy of Coventry university has told how he accidentally stumbled upon a set of conditions which allowed him to "see a ghost". This involved the existence of very low-level sound waves trapped inside a building where he found himself working late at night. The presence of this infra-sound was traced to a faulty extraction fan which was making the air vibrate at around 19 cycles per second. Tandy further discovered that infra-sound around this level has previously been linked to a number of physiological effects including breathlessness, shivering and feelings of fear. He himself reported feelings of discomfort, cold sweat and depression prior to his experience.

The human eyeball has a resonant frequency of 18 cycles per second, and it has been suggested by Tandy's associate, Dr Tony Lawrence, that the eyeball may vibrate in sympathy to low-level waves causing a "serious smearing of vision". The normal waking human brain operates at between seven and 14 cycles per second, in what is known as a beta state. When it operates at levels above or below this, we are in the areas of drug use and of hypnosis, meditation, sleep and near sleep, day-dreaming and the out-of-body experience — states in which we are "seeing" in some way even when our eyes are closed. Human perception changes or is enhanced, and it may be possible to replicate these conditions in a laboratory situation. — *Philip Rees, York*

HOW do I get a life?

AS LOUIS Armstrong said when asked the meaning of jazz: "If you have to ask, you'll never know." — *Paul Tabram, Chigasaki, Japan*

MOVE. As an ex-Glaswegian, I know it works. — *Linda McFadden, Mill Valley, California, USA*

FOR minimal environmental damage, should I dry my hands using the roller towel, a paper towel, or the hot air drier?

THE best method is the paper towel because you can then use it to wipe up any spilled water and to give your shoes a quick polish. The other methods have no such secondary uses. — *Richard Treseder, Oakland, California, USA*

DO FISH yawn?

WHEN you take a deep breath in and then breathe out, the small airways in your lungs start to close. Breathing in reopens the airways. Closed airways let blood through the lungs without picking up oxygen. Normally, the chest wall muscles hold the lungs above closing capacity, but fatigue and sleep relax the muscles and allow the airways to close. A yawn is a reflex action to pop them open. Thus fish do not yawn. — *Iain Robertson, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*

WHAT is the point of string vests? Who invented them? Are they fashionable?

THE answer is yes, yes, yes. They make excellent dish cloths. They also give you great tan lines: try Skegness, or Blackpool, if you want to feel part of the crowd. As for their origin, how about chain mail? — *John Turner, Toronto, Canada*

THE point of people wearing string vests is to make those of us that do not wear them look intelligent. For all our sakes let us hope they never become fashionable. — *Cameron Amos, Port Vila, Vanuatu*

ALMOST all dogs eat anything. Why, then, are they so fussy about fruit?

IN SAINT Lucia, the dogs gorge on fallen ripe mangoes but only at teatime. Horses feast at will, the live-long day, spitting out the long seeds as they munch. — *Annette Green, Castries, Saint Lucia*

Any answers?

IF A 750cc racing motorbike was pitted against a Formula One racing car, which would win? — *Max Chaudry, Chatham, Kent*

SHOULD my initials be IM, IMc, IML, IMcL, or IL? — *Ian McLaughlin, Leeds*

WHAT is the relationship between the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund? What are their respective mandates? — *Lionel Standing, Lennoxville, BC, Canada*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

West Papua was once a living natural history museum. Now under Indonesian rule, writes **Julian Evans**, it's a living hell

Where silence is not golden

THERE are places that just don't exist in news terms. The Pacific Ocean is one as far as Europe is concerned. Nothing happens in paradise, although the ocean is the planet's biggest climatic engine, the US Pacific Fleet spends more time at sea there than it did in the second world war, and the Americans — though no longer the French — are still testing nuclear missile telemetry in colonies (sorry, trust territories).

Now there is the devastation of Papua New Guinea's tidal wave. The dice have rolled in the direction of this huge Melanesian island on the Pacific's earthquake firebelt. But attention is already fading, as rescue turns into mopping-up operation, just as it faded in 1996 when four young British hostages held in West Papua, just across the border from PNG, were released after months in the jungle. Yet this neglect is not for lack of happenings. In West Papua's case, man-made events far more devastating than submarine earthquakes have gone on, unreported, for more than 30 years.

Indonesia owns West Papua, one of the world's greatest living natural history museums, peopled by neolithic Melanesians who have only discarded stone axes for steel in the last 50 years, and blanketed by primary forests that are home to huge mirror-winged butterflies, and at least 80 species of birds of paradise. The authorities make it hard to get there, which seems a good thing: it is a spell-binding place that few would want to open up to indiscriminate tourism.

I spent three weeks walking in the Papuan highlands in the late 1980s. (I had to bribe an official I never met for a visa that came back via diplomatic channels.) The mountains are rugged — 30 years ago, an earthquake reversed the course of one of the longest rivers, the Baliem, overnight. Its valley is cultivated by superb horticulturalists, and the Dani and Yali people, former cannibals, must now be among the most gentle and hospitable on earth.

The Indonesians call the country by a different name, Irian Jaya. The Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (ABRI) has occupied it for the last 30 years. The United Nations allowed ABRI troops to march into the former Dutch territory, but the Act of Free Choice in 1969 to rubber-stamp the UN's approval was nothing of the kind. Papuan representatives were given the choice of voting for integration with Indonesia, or having their tongues torn out personally by President Suharto's commander. Because ABRI maintains a news blackout, particularly about its war with independence fighters, it is difficult to glean details, but on the most conservative estimates, more than 40,000 Papuans have died, casualties of war or of ethnic cleansing of remote areas. At one time, ABRI's preferred method was simply to carpet-bomb the jungle.

West Papua has vast reserves of mineral, oil and lumber (a potent reason for the United States' support of the Indonesian takeover). This has presented the Papuans with their most serious problem. They are barely compensated for the loss of millions of hectares of tribal lands to paper and mining companies, and whenever they protest, ABRI infantry battalions go in with rifles and bombs.

The Free Papua Movement (OPM) independence fighters who took the four British graduates hostage in 1996 hoped the publicity might persuade ABRI to lay off its worst excesses. Such idealistic hopes have been dashed by a recent report by West Papua's combined churches which documents continuing atrocities by ABRI troops: indiscriminate shootings, the firing of villages and churches, and the conversion of villages into concentration camps.

The churches' sober account makes horrifying reading. Marginalised and dispossessed, ordinary Papuans are thrown into the arms of the OPM because they have nothing left to lose.

Kelly Kwalik was a teacher before he led the band that kidnapped the British hostages. One day, five male members of his family were arrested by soldiers after a protest at the Freeport copper mine, and detained in a freight container. Freeport is a US-Indonesian joint venture in which Rio Tinto Zinc has a 12 per cent share.

Kwalik never saw his relatives again. He took to the jungle. Protests at Freeport began because no compensation was paid for the surrender of 10,000 hectares of land for the mine, the richest source of copper on the planet. Kwalik's people regard the mountain of ore which is being cut down as the home of their ancestral spirit for some 6,000 years: "They are gouging out our mother's brains."

West Papua is another East Timor. The chief difference is that its history of UN-sponsored legality means that, unlike the Timorese, the Papuans have no legal means of holding on to their land. Their future is bleaker and, because of the news blackout, they have few avenues of information. This is a country about which you can say that no tourism is far worse than too much. So let West Papua be open to a little development, and let its first tourists be European Union ambassadors like those who were recently in Timor, and its second wave a delegation from the UN with powers to investigate the churches' report and put pressure on President Habibie.

Freeport and RTZ are now prospecting in another 3-million-hectare area. RTZ is a corporation with schizoid tendencies. Ethical investors might like to reflect that, in Britain, they sponsor the David Watt Memorial Prize for socially committed journalism, while in West Papua, under ABRI's protection, the exploitation continues to an extent unknown, and in a silence unbroken but for the sound of guns in the forest.

Islands in harm's way

It ranks alongside the Great Barrier Reef, yet oil companies are being allowed to explore nearby. **Jay Griffiths** on the growing threat to St Kilda

THE seas around the almost legendary Scottish islands of St Kilda, just 150km west of the mainland, are up to 550 metres deep. They are home to some 200 species of fish, sea urchins, deep-water squid and star fish. Submerged mountains rise sheer from the sea bed. Here in Britain's last ocean wilderness are 21 species of whales and dolphins, including the very rare blue whale.

Above the surface, the cliffs of the four islands and needle "stacs" of the St Kilda archipelago rise 300m out of the ocean, their crags so high they make their own cloud. Gales rage here for 100 days a year. The islands are famous for the communities of people who lived here for centuries in the harshest imaginable conditions before being finally evacuated in 1932, but also for their seabirds.

The world's largest gannetry is here, and there are many thousands of puffins, razorbills, guillemots and great skuas. One outcrop looks like a cube of chalk from a distance. Close up, you discover this "white rock" is actually black rock covered in hundreds of thousands of gannets.

St Kilda is Britain's only natural World Heritage site, ranking it with the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef and the Galapagos Islands. But, says Greenpeace, it is under threat. Almost the last act of the last Conservative government was to issue licences to oil companies to explore 57,000 sq km of the seabed, including the St Kilda area last year, and Labour has followed the same policies.

Now Greenpeace, trying to highlight the dangers of such proposed exploration, has applied to the UN Education, Culture and Science Organisation (Unesco) for St Kilda to be put onto an "in danger" list of World Heritage Sites. They say the nearest exploration and potential production area is just 60km away, and that oil drilling would lead to heavy traffic in oil tankers, with risks of spills.

Furthermore, in the initial exploratory stages, seismic assessment of the area will take place, using airguns or gas "exploders" which bounce sound off the sea floor and help detect oil. This, argues Greenpeace, could drive much of the wildlife out of their accustomed water-roamings, interrupting their usual behaviour patterns and feeding habits.

In Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis, many welcome any development that brings work to a fragile economy. Alan Monks, a social worker, says: "Ideally, there would be jobs created, but in alternative energy sources."

"Yes," says Jean, who works in tourism, "but when? The oil is in the pipeline, now."

"What is needed", counters Monks, "is a political decision to start developing alternative energy at the same time as oil."

Tricia O'Reilly, spokesperson for the oil companies via the trade organisation, the UK Offshore Operators Association, says: "Oil and gas have a role until other sources of energy are found. The alternatives aren't viable for a modern industrialised society."

Of the Atlantic Frontier and the area around St Kilda, she says: "The industry is taking steps to ensure that the impacts of its effects are minimised. Oil spills amount to 0.0001 per cent of total production." She adds that the oil industry funds research programmes into the marine environment with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

The National Trust for Scotland administers the island and allows day tourists and a few working parties and campers to stay on the main island each year. It says it shares the concerns expressed by Greenpeace about the threat from the oil: "Any oil pollution near St Kilda would have a devastating effect on the landscape, the seascape and the remarkable birdlife."

Stuart Murray, the NTS warden based on St Kilda, is pragmatic. "It's good that people such as Greenpeace raise public awareness of these issues. In an ideal world, such developments wouldn't happen; but it's not an ideal world. If there's oil, it will be drilled. The important thing is to keep a tight grip on the way they develop an area."

Scottish Natural Heritage, which leases St Kilda from the National Trust for Scotland, thinks that the future exploration is far enough away from St Kilda not to worry about. "We have no concerns for birdlife on St Kilda," says a spokesman. But he admits that seismic explorations may disturb sea-life.

The Government seems to see its role as one of assisting the oil industry to implement its plans — with as little fuss as possible. A letter written last August by John Battle, minister of state for science, energy and industry, to Richard Page MP, concerning the Atlantic Frontier, talked of a "strategy agreed with industry and other government departments . . . to avoid media opportunities for Greenpeace."

Peter Melchett, executive director of Greenpeace, who recently visited St Kilda, says: "If people in this country heard that the Great Barrier Reef was under threat, or the Grand Canyon, there'd be an outcry. Yet here in the UK, an equivalent World Heritage Site is under threat from government and oil companies. St Kilda is part of our universal heritage, it belongs to everyone in the world. It is unique and terribly fragile in the face of oil."

Mae MacLeod, one of just a handful of surviving ex-St Kildans, says that when she heard of a potential threat to the islands from oil developments, she was, "very put out about it. I really hope Greenpeace succeeds in putting up a big protest against it. If these people who were intending to do this would only go and see the island for themselves. You can't find another island like it."



St Kilda . . . Britain's only natural World Heritage Site PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LOMAX



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Debussy : Pelléas et Mélisande Sayao/Singher/Tibbett/Kipnis/ Orchestra and Chorus of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York/Cooper.
(Naxos Historica 8.110030-31) (2CDs) £9.99

NAXOS'S astonishing series of operatic archive recordings continues with this riveting, if idiosyncratic version of Debussy's symbolist masterpiece, taken from a Met broadcast in January 1945. Its chief glories are Bidu Sayao's unsurpassed Mélisande and the Golaud of Lawrence Tibbett, whose explosive, harrowingly intense performance more then compensates for the occasional lapse of intonation. Martial Singher is a dark-voiced Pelléas and Alexander Kipnis a moving Arkel, once you get used to his heavy Russian accent. Cooper plays up the Wagnerian influences. It is unmissable, particularly at this bargain price. — *Tim Ashley*

Suk: Asrael Symphony; Fairy Tale; Serenade for Strings Czech Philharmonic/Jiri Belohlavek (Chandos 96402) (2CDs) £19.99

THE combination of Jiri Belohlavek and the Czech Philharmonic is unbeatable when it comes to the music of Josef Suk, though you need nerves of steel to be able to get through the Asrael Symphony. Taking its name from the Islamic purveyor of souls to the afterlife, it unflinchingly records Suk's emotions at the deaths, a year apart, of his beloved wife Otilka and his father-in-law and mentor, Dvórak. Grief has rarely been so nakedly conveyed. There are strong stylistic echoes of Strauss and Mahler, though Suk denies himself the latter's spiritual consolation and the symphony's comparatively calm close speaks of emotional exhaustion rather than acceptance. The Serenade For Strings — an exquisite, beautiful work which rivals Tchaikovsky's more famous piece of the same name — provides some relief from the density of it all. — *TA*

Walton: Belshazzar's Feast; Symphony No 1 Hampson/CBSO/Rattle (EMI CDC5 56592-2) £14.49

NEARING the end of his last season as music director in Birmingham, Sir Simon Rattle in this celebratory disc offers an ideal Walton coupling, bringing together two masterpieces of the 1930s. Belshazzar's Feast, from 1931, has never been given quite so spectacular a recording. It is spacious and full, yet meticulously detailed, with the widest dynamic range. Rattle adopts similar speeds to Walton's, and the extra bite and urgency are thrilling. Thomas Hampson, as the resonant baritone soloist, is firm and dramatic. — *Edward Greenfield*

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LYDIA Mordkovitch transforms the elusive Elgar Violin Sonata. In rapt and concentrated playing she gives it new mystery, with the subtlest pointing and shading down to whispered pianissimos. It includes a version of Sursum Corda never previously recorded. — *EG*

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Keys to a mystery . . . Bill Pullman and Kim Dickens in Zero Effect

A most private detective

CINEMA
Richard Williams

NOT for some years has the cinema produced a private eye as original and interesting as Daryl Zero, the sociophobic hero of **Zero Effect**. Preternaturally sensitive to his surroundings but petrified of exposure to the outside world, Zero coops himself up in a Los Angeles penthouse, where he feeds out of tins while practising a Kurt Cobain impersonation.

Bill Pullman, already impressive this year in David Lynch's Lost Highway and Wim Wenders's Edge Of Violence, is perfect for a character whose exaggerated sensory perception and kitschy blitheness are undermined by that mysterious timid twitchiness, making him more than just an amalgam of Hannibal Lecter and Agent Dale Cooper. In the shifting and unpredictable tectonic plates of his personality, Daryl Zero resembles no one so much as Sherlock Holmes, a thin crust of lofty reticence barely enough to contain the friction of neurosis and obsession that powers his intellect.

Zero is the creation of Jake Kasdan, son of Lawrence Kasdan, director of Body Heat, The Big Chill and The Accidental Tourist. When he wrote and directed Zero Effect, Jake Kasdan was 22 years old. Nevertheless the film is completely assured in its narrative coherence, its technical command, and in its amusing modern pastiche of the foibles of Conan Doyle's master detective.

Ben Stiller is Steve Arlo, Zero's only medium of communication with the outside world — his Dr Watson. Stiller, who came to prominence with Reality Bites and is currently starring with Cameron Diaz in the US smash There's Something About Mary, gives Arlo the properly nannyish combination of reverence for his master's gifts and disapproval of his personal habits, his uncertainty exploited by his luscious fiancée (Angela Featherstone), who is keen to get him out of Zero's clutches and safely into matrimony.

While Arlo dresses at all times with the faintly ludicrous sobriety of a Prada shop assistant, Zero slips between disguises — nerdy, dopy, grungy — for his rare appearances in the world outside his penthouse. This is the best chameleon turn since John Malkovich's quick-change killer enlivened In The Line Of Fire.

Zero Effect is a very funny film, and intermittently hilarious, with a dry and droll script. But the plot, while perfectly adequate, is little more than an excuse for Kasdan to make a film about Zero. "When you go looking for something," the great man tells his sidekick in one of several solemn mini-lectures on the art of deduction, "your chances of finding it are very small. Because out of all the things in the world, you're looking for only one of them." What they're looking for in this instance is a set of keys belonging to businessman and blackmail target Gregory Stark, played by Ryan O'Neal with a puffy pomposity astutely borrowed from the later work of Robert Wagner and Albert Finney.

It's a strange and sometimes quite magical little film, upholstered by fine incidental music — little stabs of handtooled urban funk for narrative momentum, occasional blasts of boozy balladry *à la* Tom Waits for dramatic underscoring. And it gets better as it goes on.

When the search for the blackmailer leads Zero and Arlo to Oregon and a gamine paramedic called Gloria (Kim Dickens), the importance of the film's stylistic tricks recedes as its romantic heart begins to beat. Gradually Zero falls under Gloria's spell, his layers of emotional disguise melting one by one.

It's not just him, either. The previously unknown Dickens isn't what you'd call outstandingly beautiful, but she doesn't need to be. She radiates some configuration of qualities — eager warmth, an inner life — that makes you just yearn to be sitting in a diner over a chocolate shake opposite a girl with cropped hair and a red dress. And what the hell? This, too, is the movies.

Whatever else it may be, Abbas Kiarostami's The Traveller is probably the best film ever made about football, even though the only actual football we see is played between two teams of small boys in a back street, and doesn't last more than a minute or two. It's not even about football, really. It's about the dreams and passions and disappointments of childhood, and it's the best film about small boys since Au Revoir Les Enfants, which is as high as praise comes from this quarter.

Made in 1974, on black and white stock of variable quality, this is a film whose technical roughness simply endorses the honesty and humanity of its maker's eye. The light, the angles and the sound have the directness of the great Italian neo-realists, and the same unpretentious clarity of vision.

Kiarostami draws a compelling central performance from Jamileh Sheiki as a child of about 10, growing up in a small town in Iran, already aware that life won't be handing him any favours. At school he's truculent. At home he dreams of travelling to Tehran, where the national team are due to play. To raise the money, he enlists the aid of his best friend and turns himself into a confidence trickster.

A sequence in which he finds a broken camera and persuades his schoolmates to pay him to have their photographs taken, turning himself into a miniature August Sander and the subjects into exhibits, is moving and affectionate and totally unsentimental. A similar warmth suffuses Kiarostami's view of the boy's relationships with adult strangers as he boards the night bus to Tehran.

The Traveller deserves to be as well known as The Bicycle Thieves, with which it also shares some salient characteristics, such as a powerful sense of time and place, of individuals submerged in an urban crowd, of humanity — children and grown-ups — struggling to get on with life.

Just crazy about the boy

TELEVISION
Desmond Christy

THANK heaven for the United States, for without it what would British documentary makers do? Inside Story: Boy Crazy (BBC1) dealt with events that may have excited America even more than what the president did or did not do with Monica Lewinsky. Last year a Seattle schoolteacher, Mary K Letourneau, was arrested for child rape. The law in Seattle is very straightforward — if somebody has sex with a child it is rape. Mary K had sex with a 13-year-old pupil. So it must be rape, even if the boy concerned did not feel that he had been raped and seems to be quite happy that he is now a father.

There was much talk about love. You and I probably thought, "What's love got to do with it? The woman is not well." How else would you explain why a woman who was regarded as a wonderful teacher, a good mother and wife should start sleeping with a 13-year-old pupil?

This, indeed, was eventually where we were led. The best that psychiatry seems to be able to come up with to describe Mary K's behaviour is that she is suffering from a "bi-polar disorder". The symptoms include "pleasure in high-risk activities without regard to painful consequences", but "bi-polar disorder" doesn't play too well in the media (do racing drivers suffer from bi-polar disorder?).

The good news is that the judge, to my surprise, bought Mary K's defence. The bad news is that not going to prison for seven-and-a-half years meant that she had to go on a sex offenders course. Part of the "cure" is, believe it or not, that she should have to stand in front of her own children and say something like: "Mummy is a rapist, but she loves you and is not going to rape you." Did I imagine that? No, the law and the sex offenders course was made to deal with male paedophiles, not with female pedagogues who are cracking up.

The more we heard about Mary K, the more convinced we became that she is mentally unbalanced. She had a strict Catholic upbringing, a mother who crusaded against sex education, a father whom Mary adored but who was so rightwing that even the Republican party could not accommodate his barmy politics. Her father, we learned, had himself had a long affair with one of his own university students. His daughter's problems coincided with his death from cancer.

As so often in this kind of documentary, we begin to wonder not at the person who has committed the crime but at the society which punishes them. The court accepts that Mary K is ill. It forces her to take treatment that probably only makes her more ill. The law (if she is nuts, why not treat her like an ill person?) suspects that she will try to meet up with the boy, Villy, she "raped", so it has her followed. The law, which doesn't seem to have done anything to look after Villy, apprehends him and Mary K in a car, late at night. Mary K is taken back to court and her suspended sentence is activated.

She seemed sicker by the end of the programme than she did at the start. The children from her marriage are a thousand miles away with her husband, a man who with one breath acknowledges that his wife is ill, but with the next talks as if she is in full command of her faculties. The children are all getting psychiatric help. What a mess.

Still, the media have had a great time, Villy got $50,000 for revealing his identity in the press, and the public has been entertained. As Mary K was bundled off to prison somebody shouted out, "When you get out will you date me?" This witty guy will have to wait until 2005, by which time Mary K may be mad enough to accept. One more triumph for the forces of law and order.

Marshall plan lifts Gershwin to higher plane

THE PROMS
Edward Greenfield

IN THIS year of opera at the Proms, here was the biggest and longest offering yet, Gershwin's Porgy And Bess. If any traditionalist is still under the illusion that this is just a jumped-up musical, then the scale, concentration and intensity of this performance under the most versatile of young black musicians, Wayne Marshall, left us in no doubt: Porgy is a masterpiece.

It is more than 10 years since Sir Simon Rattle demonstrated just that point in a historic Glyndebourne presentation, and Wayne Marshall was then one of his lieutenants. He has now become an electrifying conductor, and he drew from the BBC Concert Orchestra a whipcrack performance totally idiomatic in its jazzy overtones, with outstanding work from the brass. Equally, the massive Bournemouth Symphony Chorus, with the BBC Singers as nucleus, sang with fervour.

Marshall brought out just how deeply Gershwin had immersed himself in black musical culture, not least in the choruses, based on traditional forms. The exotic colouring of the score was reinforced, yet what stands at the root of the opera's impact are the tunes, dozens of them as great as anything Gershwin ever wrote, like Summertime, and Bess You Is My Woman Now. In this his centenary year, Gershwin's mastery has never been clearer.

It helped that taking the title roles were the two singers who had such success in the Glyndebourne production, Willard White as Porgy and Cynthia Hayman as Bess. Here was a performance that brought enhanced richness of tone, helped by the warm Royal Albert Hall acoustic.

The snag, of course, was that words tended to disappear, but with the complete libretto in the programme book and some helpful semi-staging, that mattered little. Also from the Glyndebourne production and still outstanding were Cynthia Clarey as Serena, rich and vibrant, making her mourning for her husband a big-gulp moment, and Marietta Simpson as the store-keeper, Maria — even fruitier and wonderfully characterful, roundly taming the insidious Sporting Life.

That tricky role was strongly taken by Michael Forest, using a fuller voice than usual, bringing out its sinister side. And one nice touch came when Marshall stepped down from the podium, and played the big honky-tonk piano solo in the opening scene, just as he had done at Glyndebourne.

Bob Flynn meets the last of a breed of American film actors equally at home in both comedy and drama

A slice of Lemmon

HIS uniform is that of a retired insurance clerk — dapper golfing slacks, a windbreaker. Jack Lemmon, now 74, looks the part he has played so often — the American white-collar Joe, now a little stooped by age. His physical frailty accentuates the still boyish features that seem to teeter between joy and sadness. I ask how he is and it's hard not to smile, for the ghost of Felix Unger, Lemmon's hypochondriac flatmate in The Odd Couple, shimmers before me.

"I've got an infection of some damn sort in my eye," he says. "It affects the muscles in my left eyeball and it won't move. And I get double vision unless I wear an eye-patch now and again. It looks like I'm trying out for old Robert Newton parts."

The famous yuk yuk laugh that has exploded across so many films explodes again, and a gallery of his anxious screen faces flash into my mind — Lemmon tugging at a perpetually too-tight collar, clutching a stomach boiling with ulcers or struggling to clear his sinuses. He was the man strangled by modern life, the contemporary urban clown. With James Stewart gone, he is the last of the breed of American movie actors who can cross from broad comedy into serious drama.

"I never considered myself as a leading man," says Lemmon. "I remember arguing with the publicists in Hollywood. I kept on saying, I'm not a leading man, I'm not a comedian, I'm a character actor."

A character actor, maybe, but one who commands the screen with a frantic presence. The hands fly and the face bends and the head switches from side to side as if watching for the next trapdoor the world will open up on him.

Admittedly, recent years have brought clunking footnotes to his career. But in the fifties and sixties he was Tom Hanks and Jim Carrey rolled into one, only better and funnier than both. In contrast to the heroic cool of his contemporary Paul Newman, Lemmon personified the American salaryman buffeted by the slipstream of the corporate world.

Lemmon is famous for being the most gracious man in an ego-crazed Hollywood. If there is dirt on him, it is buried deep. He has lived a low-profile, off-screen life with his wife of over 30 years, Felicia Farr (Billy Wilder was their best man in 1962). Born in 1925, in Newton, Massachusetts, he was the only, sickly child (the adenoid problems are real) to John and Mildred Lemmon — his father was a salesman who became chairman of the Doughnut Company of America.

"I was around eight when I did my first play at school and I thought, Jesus, I like this," says Lemmon. "It had nothing to do with talent and everything to do with being accepted by my peers, like every kid wants to be."

He went to Harvard in 1943, excelled in a string of college productions and briefly enrolled in the wartime navy as an ensign before returning to civilian life as an aspiring actor in New York in 1947.

He ended up playing piano in Old Nick's bar on Second Avenue, accompanying the silent Chaplin and Keaton films that ran every night. But he eventually landed a part on Broadway, was spotted by Hollywood scouts and rushed into his first film, in 1954, opposite the greatest movie comedienne of her time, Judy Holliday.

It Should Happen To You was directed by George Cukor, one of Hollywood's established masters, who gave Lemmon stomach ache by re-taking almost every scene. "Every time we'd do a scene George would say, 'Terrific, let's try it again. Jack, less, a little less.' Eventually I turned on George and said, 'Are you trying to tell me not to act?' and he said, 'Yes, oh God, yes.' Best piece of direction I ever got." Suddenly, he was the bright new comic actor of Hollywood.

IN 1959 Billy Wilder "grabbed" him in a restaurant. "He outlined the plot of Some Like It Hot in two minutes and said: 'You'll be running around in drag for about 80 per cent of the film, wanna do it?' I took about two seconds to say yes. Because it was Billy. In other hands it could have been an embarrassing burlesque."

As Jerry/Daphne, the buddy-in-drag to Tony Curtis, he stole every scene with an object lesson in comic timing. He shared a hilarious dance sequence with Joe E Brown and the funniest closing scene in film history — "I'm a man," he shouts, tearing off his wig. "Nobody's perfect," says his unperturbed fiancé, Brown. He also got to share a bunk with Marilyn Monroe.

"I got along great with her, I thought she was very sweet," says Lemmon. "But you could only get so close then she'd sort of push you away. She had very few friends, but she wouldn't let you get too close to her . . . I knew she was basically unhappy. I didn't know until after the film that she'd had a miscarriage during it."

In the space of a year, he starred in another landmark film written for him and directed by Wilder, which sealed his success and marked a new decade and a new era of American cinema. The Apartment opened in 1960 with a subversive take on corporate America with Lemmon as C C Baxter, the young insurance man who lets his apartment out to his managers for adulterous affairs.

"Until he turns the key to the apartment in, C C Baxter was becoming nothing more than a young pimp," says Lemmon. "Billy Wilder was making a great deal of social comment in that film . . . the behaviour of corporate America was getting a lambasting."

He made seven films with Wilder, whom he regards as his mentor. "He had a more positive influence on my career than any other single person," says Lemmon.

One of his most heart-rending performances was in 1982's Missing. Directed by Costa Gavras, it was based on the true story of Ed Horman, a businessman searching for his son, disappeared during a coup in Chile. Lemmon's stubborn compassion in the face of an American cover-up are palpable.

"The important thing to me was to capture the essence of the man," he says. "And I was able to get close to Ed Horman and his family before he passed away. He was a terrific guy, and I was proud to play him. It was a wonderful experience in many ways."

In the nineties he appeared briefly in JFK, and in Robert Altman's films The Player and Short Cuts. But his last great performance came in 1993, when he was 68, playing the appalling real-estate cheat Shelley "The Machine" Levine in Glengarry Glen Ross. Surrounded by admiring major-league players of the next acting generation — Al Pacino, Ed Harris and Kevin Spacey — Lemmon's Levine seemed like a summation of his past roles gone to seed. Again, he credits others.

"It was the best ensemble cast I've ever worked with," says Lemmon. "The older one gets, the richer the parts get. What they forgot to tell me was that there are fewer of them. There's King Lear and so forth, but contemporary parts like that don't come down the pike too often. I've been so damn fortunate to have worked with so many great people. I've done a few stinkers in my time, but overall I've been very, very lucky indeed."


Urban clown: Jack Lemmon personified the American salaryman

Setting to new music

OBITUARY
Alfred Schnittke

OF PART German descent, the Russian composer Alfred Schnittke, who has died aged 63, always acknowledged the musically formative importance of the two years he spent in Vienna as a child. It was in the Austrian capital that he started to learn the piano at the age of 12. It was there, too, that he began to try his hand at composition, and to gain early insight into the nature of his wider European inheritance.

Schnittke's early adult musical character was nevertheless very much a product of his Soviet training and environment. It was doubtless to his eventual advantage that, like others of his student generation in the USSR, he was almost totally protected from the supposedly evil influence of 20th century musical developments in Western Europe and, in particular, from those of the post-war avant garde.

Schnittke was born in Engels, a town on the Volga River. His mother was of German descent, his father was German-Jewish, being born in Frankfurt. As a student at the Moscow Conservatory during the enforced isolation of what amounted to a musical time warp, Schnittke's work was necessarily grounded in the Russian tradition. It was certainly the security of this inherited identity that was later to give him the courage to maintain a childlike freshness of approach — an approach that was in turn to act as protection against the more defiant position-taking of many of his contemporaries.

Schnittke's musical style arose from a quite singular ability to make the commonplace seem extraordinary, to combine consonance with dissonance in the most natural-sounding way possible.

Schnittke wrote a large amount of music in all genres. Much of it was composed following a succession of severe strokes in the summer of 1985 that left him physically weakened and partly paralysed.

Showing extraordinary spirit and a determination to live the rest of his musical life to the full his later music quickly came to suggest that physical adversity may even have had creativity-enhancing consequences of a more spiritual kind.

Four outstanding string quartets, a string trio and a piano quintet are fine examples of a classical high-art seriousness within a chamber music repertoire, whose extremes range from the seriously experimental to the frankly hilarious. But it is perhaps less for his two recent operas, The Life Of An Idiot and Faust, or five symphonies than for his distinctive contribution to the repertoire of instrumental concertos — mostly for one or more strings, but including three for piano and one for piano-four-hands — that he may be best remembered.

Moving to Germany in the late 1980s with his second wife Irina, he spent some time in Berlin before settling in Hamburg, where he taught at the Hochschule für Musik in between travelling the world to attend performances of his works.

Susan Bradshaw

Alfred Schnittke, composer; born November 24, 1934; died August 3, 1998

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 16 1998

Feats of Clay

Geoff Dyer

I'm A Little Special:
A Muhammad Ali Reader
edited by Gerald Early
Yellow Jersey Press 299pp £16

JUST as people remember, proverbially, where they were when Kennedy was assassinated, so I remember what I was doing on the nights of many of Muhammad Ali's greatest fights: listening to them on the radio in the kitchen while my dad shaved. More striking than the vivid contingency of such memories is the suspicion that they are not genuine, that they have been created retrospectively. Actual events have become so encrusted with significance that the subsequent elaborations of memory are impossible to detach from the incidents in which they have their origin. In thinking of Ali, in other words, we are in the realm of myth as lived experience.

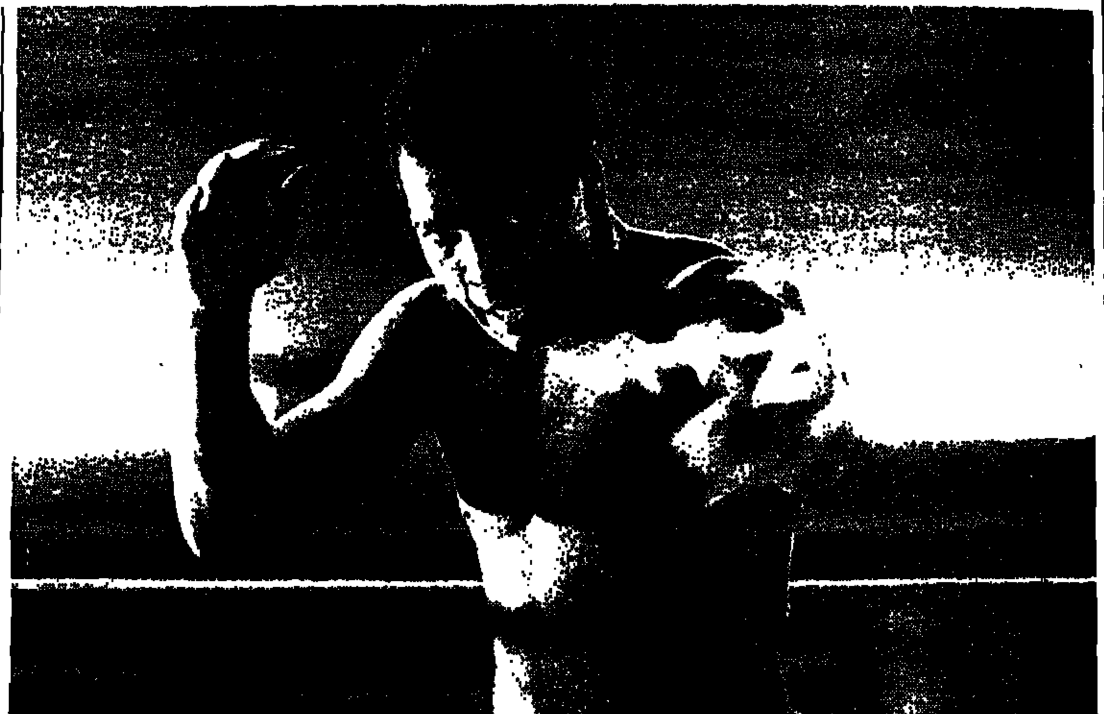
The recent documentary When We Were Kings exemplifies this process: even if the 1975 Rumble in the Jungle passed you by *at the time*, the film creates a space in which the fight with George Foreman — barely glimpsed on screen — can be not so much replayed as belatedly accommodated in memory.

Norman Mailer wrote one of his best books, The Fight, about that encounter. In it he suggested, correctly, that being a Black Muslim might "be the core of Ali's existence and the centre of his strength". Conversion to the Nation of Islam was, of course, crucial to the transformation of Cassius Clay from exquisitely unorthodox athlete and proto-rapper — the Louisville Lip — to a figure of historical importance. If he had not become a disciple of Elijah Muhammad, then Ali would not have possessed the proud discipline of principle to resist the draft ("I got no quarrel with them Vietcong"), would not have become such an important symbol and example of the liberating potential of black consciousness.

E M Cioran remarked that the further one advances in life the less there is to convert to. As with Malcolm X, Ali's conversion to this cult with its mumbo-jumbo theology and its formidable imperatives to self-improvement was both a revolutionary step forward and a sign of how little he had advanced in life *up to that point*. It also set a limit to how far he could advance without in some measure falling foul — as happened to Malcolm X — of what he had converted to.

In an introduction that provides an excellent context for the articles he has assembled, editor Gerald Early delineates issues like these in such a way as to celebrate Ali's extraordinary power without being dazzled by it. Commenting on Ali's low score in an army IQ test, Early observes: "I think the score was an honest reflection of Ali's mental abilities . . . When he was younger he could successfully debate with those who were much smarter . . . because he had the zealot's set of answers to life's questions. His mind worked through formulas and clichés. His personality gave them a life and vibrancy that they would otherwise have lacked. He was intuitive, glib, richly gregarious and intensely creative, like an artist." Specifically, as Mailer claimed, he was the fighter who managed to "demonstrate that boxing was a 20th century art".

These pieces offer variously interesting takes and out-takes on that artistry, either providing commentary to accompany mental re-runs of the canonical fight sequences, or more privileged speculation as to what was going on off-screen, in Ali's mind. If even the hottest sports



The original and still the greatest . . . Muhammad Ali

reporting goes quickly cold once removed from the narrow-columned oven of the back pages, then the so-called new journalism of the sixties and seventies now seems as archaic as Smollett. The arch snidery of Tom Wolfe and the hectic excess of Hunter Thompson look increasingly like individualised instances of some saggy default rhetoric. Even a heavy hitter like Mailer sometimes edges dangerously close to this kind of thing, but his piece on Ali and Frazier is marked by a sustained clarity of engagement. Less grandly, several pieces offer poignant glimpses of Ali in private, especially in the last few years when just keeping his hands steady enough to sign autographs requires the single-mindedness of a concert pianist.

According to his former trainer Angelo Dundee, however, the saddest thing is not that Ali ended up, in Frazier's unforgiving phrase, as "damaged goods" but that we never saw him at his peak. When Ali lost his licence in 1967 he was still improving, adding strength to his speed. When he began his comeback in the autumn of 1970, his legs had begun to go and he had to change style: from avoiding being hit to coping with being hit.

Other things had changed too. Ali's rise to fame was part of a larger tidal surge of Black American advancement. More exactly, the emergence of his revolutionary approach was both contemporaneous with and a stylistic equivalent of free jazz or the new music, which was itself intricately related to (and a profound expression of) a militant flowering of Black American identity. Malcolm X was killed in 1965, Martin Luther King in 1968. John Coltrane died in 1967. Having announced the shape of jazz to come in 1959, Ornette Coleman, a decade later, was performing only rarely. When Ali began fighting again, then, it was not just a personal physical peak that had been missed: a wider cultural movement that had run in tandem with his own progress had also pretty well exhausted itself. Symbolically, his wresting the title from Foreman in 1975 was a belated reclamation of the highest aspirations of Black unity.

These days Ali is wheeled on to the world stage like a zombie from a superior era of African-American achievement. You look at him and ask, like Wilfred Owen in "Futility", "Was it for this the Clay grew tall?"

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £14 contact CultureShop (see page 29)

Inner furies that drive the Chancellor

Andrew Rawnsley

Gordon Brown
by Hugh Pym and Nick Kochan
Bloomsbury 256pp £16.99

GORDON BROWN is a mess. He plays tennis in mismatched socks. He's a spare tool at any domestic task. He overslept on the morning of his first Budget. The Emperor of the Treasury couldn't tell you the price of a pint of milk — and that's according to his friends. He ripped the seat out of his trousers on the way to delivering a major speech. He was once so immersed in a conversation about political tactics that he opened a car door into the incoming traffic and it was smashed off its hinges and swept away. These revealing shafts into the complex character that is the Chancellor of the Exchequer have surely made a very shy man cringe.

This Brown study paints a politician of great intellectual ability and self-confidence allied to tormenting personal insecurities. He would not be the first person, and certainly not the only politician, to be driven by his burdens.

The authors are shy of making their own judgments, but provide the material for our own speculations. Perhaps it comes from being the middle child of three sons. Perhaps the ferocious work-rate and the remorseless power-hugging that simultaneously awes and repels his fellow ministers springs from the fear of going blind. He lost his left eye when a rugby boot was scraped down his face, and cannot know when he might lose the sight of his right.

The inner furies consuming the Chancellor are both an asset and a liability to the man and the Government. The tenacity, focus and passion with which he is pursuing his ambitions to release the potential of Britain by building the skills base, reinventing public services and reforming welfare, is impressive.

The other side of that obsessive coin is a thick streak of paranoia and a reliance on a tight little praetorian guard of advisers. It is an all-male coven, the Brown Gang. The only woman admitted to the inner circle is his political secretary Sue Nye, and that is because, metaphorically speaking, she has balls of steel.

I would hate this book if I were Sarah Macaulay, who is oddly described as Brown's "official girlfriend". From what I have heard of her, she is a bright, interesting woman. Yet here she is reduced to a wardrobe mistress and decorator, fixing the tatty kitchen in Brown's Scottish home and choosing for him more interesting ties which he never wears.

One of the authors' sources tells us: "Any woman marrying Brown would be number five after politics, the Labour party, Ed [Balls], and Charlie [Whelan]." The authors imply that she would actually be seventh — after Geoffrey Robinson and football. And it would not be unreasonable to guess that she would really be eighth — after his desire to be prime minister.

The secretiveness of the Brown coterie served him well in Opposition. The plan to grant independence to the Bank of England and the details of the windfall tax were proofed against leaks. The habit has been a curse in government, causing antagonism within the Treasury, resentment among Cabinet colleagues, and abrasion with Number Ten.

I recommend this absorbing, anecdote-rich account to Brown's Cabinet colleagues, even to those who loathe the Chancellor. They will better understand the brooding, restless, awkward titan of the Treasury. And if to understand is to forgive, then they may even like him a little bit more.

Loss adjustment

Tobias Hill

The Clothes They Stood Up In
by Alan Bennett
Profile Books 57pp £3.99

THIS is a story about space. Alan Bennett's long short story begins with one kind of space and ends with another, and in between there is some wonderful situation comedy, some excellent, intelligent social observations, and a very English blend of cosiness and violence.

When the Ransomes come back from an evening at the opera ("Cosi fan tutte, or Cosi, as Mrs Ransome had learnt to call it") they find that someone has cleared out their Notting Hill flat, right down to the carpets — right down, in fact, to the floral toilet-paper holder.

Habit-bound and childless, the Ransomes move through separate and divergent reactions to their loss. For him, the changes are as petty as his own marital tyranny. The more anal he gets, the more ridiculous he seems. "The only paper in the house was the programme from Cosi, and passing it round the door Mrs Ransome saw, not without satisfaction, that Mr Ransome was going to have to wipe his bottom on a picture of Mozart."

For her, the burglary comes to mean other things. There is the great pleasure of disownership, and the prospect of new experiences. In her search for shoe polish, she visits the local Asian corner shop for the first time in 30 years: "Though, since ox blood was what she wanted (or Mr Ransome required), she thought vaguely that it might be a shade to which they had religious objections." The flat begins to fill with Turkish rugs and cane furniture; and the smells of curry.

Remembering their fish slices and cake slices, Mrs Ransome realises that: "They had transported this paraphernalia with them across 32 years of marriage to no purpose at all that Mrs Ransome could see, and now at a stroke they were rid of the lot. Without quite knowing why, and while she was washing up their two cups in the sink, Mrs Ransome suddenly burst out singing."

The characters are gently done, without physical description, much like stage identities waiting to be filled by actors. From the start, you know the ending isn't going to be all roses, but by the time they are (separately, secretly) listening to a tape of pornographic goings-on on their own sofa, Bennett has brought about a marvellous, ludicrous and touching situation comedy, in which Mrs Ransome's journey to a sense of self is the star turn: "Sometimes . . . Mrs Ransome would get depressed, feeling she had missed the bus; though what bus it was or where it was going she would have found it hard to say."

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A caste of thousands

Adam Mars-Jones

Freedom Song
by Amit Chaudhuri
Picador 196pp £12.99

AMIT CHAUDHURI'S writing comes as a mild therapeutic shock to those who visualise India as either benightedly rural or bustlingly urban: his characters may live in Calcutta, but they live at a private angle to their city. The cast of Freedom Song is large and tenuously related. The focus isn't tight — it's hard, even in so short a book, to keep track. The plot is oblique to the point of non-existence, and events which would be set pieces in any other novel slip past without fuss. Yet the impression made by all this elusive humanity — an amateur group putting on a play, a man getting married — is subtle and strong.

The book opens with a muezzin calling the faithful to prayer, but Chaudhuri's characters are Hindus. They feel beleaguered by Islam both religiously and politically — and then suddenly realise that they have voiced their fears in the presence of someone such as Abdullah the tailor. Their reaction is both worried and mildly defiant. ("He didn't hear us" and then, "Even if he did, so what?")

"Here, in the deep green humid Gangetic delta in Brugal", as the narrative reminds us, "among jackfruit trees, malaria, and bluebottle flies, was one of the last socialist governments of the world". One of the main characters is even a fervent communist, ready to condemn the new and sinister world order ("and every relative, cousin or uncle who happened to disagree with him"), yet he as much as anyone seems — to borrow a wonderfully paradoxical phrase — "lulled by a vortex of calm".

The characters seem to resist any amount of prompting to engage with history. In this respect, they are like amateur actors in rehearsal, who "did not have the ability to concentrate for very long" and so "drifted out of the play into their own lives".

Freedom Song seems an absurdly flat title to attach to a book that isn't obviously celebratory. Its only applicability is sweetly ironical: in the world's largest democracy, freedom includes the freedom to melt, to drift, to experience your greatest intensity in moments of drift and melting. ("Time and Calcutta seemed to pass through him like water.") The narrative flits from mind to mind, flashes forward and back, finding a great and casual beauty at the edge of the haphazard.

The vivid moments of Freedom Song are moments when the world catches characters off guard: "To see the familiar and the living in a moment of inattention is sometimes as extraordinary as seeing the dead." Boundaries are somehow most real when blurred, as smoking among friends makes one character feel paradoxically "solitary, asocial, alone, in communion with the smoke entering and leaving him ..." During a wedding, the bridegroom feels "as if he had been smuggled into another world but could still communicate in monosyllables with this one".

Marriage has a sacred aspect — "The pact of ancestry, caste and divinity which the two priests would make on his behalf" — but any transformation it wreaks must be slow-acting. The bride's shadow is described as hovering on the wall of her new home, "trying to find its home here". But the marriage is not a failure.

The newlyweds have a real prospect of emulating the elderly married couple in the book, who were acquainted in childhood. Back then, "she was hardly aware of him, but unaware of him in a different way from her unawareness of him now". Her long and successful marriage has shown her "a different way of taking someone's presence for granted".

This is an author, though, who takes nothing for granted. Politics must be present in a novel about a time of emergency but Chaudhuri can admit that even in these peace-loving people there is "a pleasurable and wholly fictitious feeling of doom" about going shopping in Calcutta the day after a wave of explosions in Bombay, and a sense of near-disappointment ("for they succumbed easily to excitement") at the news that a blast closer to home was only a local hoodlum's arsenal accidentally exploding.

Amit Chaudhuri's subject, in this tender and capricious book, is inexhaustible: "The semi-lit casual backstage and dress rehearsals, the unconscious helpless putting on and putting off of different selves."

Satire by stealth

Nicholas Lezard

The New Life
by Orhan Pamuk
Faber 296pp £6.99 pbk

ABOUT a year ago, I was having lunch with the man luckless enough to be my editor at Faber & Faber. "I'll have to cut this short," he said. "Orhan Pamuk's coming to the offices." "Who?" I spluttered. An esteemed Turkish author, I was told, who was having his latest novel published in Britain.

"You should read it," said the editor, "it's very good."

"Yeah, right," I grunted, making a mental note to avoid for ever the works of the man who had cut short my [illegible] to avail myself of Faber's legendary hospitality (two bottles of beer and a bowl of Thai noodles).

So, who Orhan Pamuk? Well, imagine a modernist, brain-churning writer, the kind who gets compared to Proust, Borges, Calvino, Ballard, Hesse and Faulkner. Now imagine that this writer operates in a country culturally torn between East and West, where stepping over-enthusiastically into either position can get you into deep trouble; and now imagine that the latest novel by such a writer — a deep, allusive, difficult, richly textured novel — sells 200,000 copies in his native country; becoming, in fact, the fastest-selling novel in that country's history. No wonder I was all but left with the bill by my departing editor.

For the first 80-odd pages of



The New Life I found this last fact — Pamuk's saleability — the most staggering. What kind of reading public hands such success to such a book? For I was finding it heavy going. Are the readers inordinately sophisticated, far better than decadent Westerners at picking up nuance and meaning? Or are they so starved of prose that they would achieve similar relief from the copy on cereal packets?

The truth is much nearer the first proposition than the second. But the book does allude to a kind of collective prose-hunger. It begins with the narrator reading a book which transforms his life to the point where he becomes obsessed: he abandons his studies in order to find others who have been changed utterly by the book, travelling around Turkey on its lethally dangerous buses, surviving by lifting the wallets and identities of dead fellow-passengers, all the time looking for something, and addressing his remarks to an Angel.

This is not my cup of *raki* at all, I thought; a strong whiff of magic realism, and all this about a book that changes lives seemed to be making claims that this one, at least, cannot fulfil. But suddenly, around page 80, everything started to set.

Correspondences within the book became clearer, as if it was haunting itself; a sly, anarchic sense of humour became discernible; and it looked as though it was also filleting Turkey like a kipper.

It is a satire on a demi-police state, a country unsure whether to be secular or religious; and on anywhere else you like where history and commercialism are at war. "A good book is something that reminds us of the whole world," says a character. The New Life is not parochial.

You could become obsessive about this book: at times you wonder whether the book that spooks the narrator is in fact this one — giving The New Life a dizzying, vertiginous feel, at once as real as a phone directory and as insubstantial as a bubble.

Sometimes it seemed like Borges crossed with The Usual Suspects, but without the tricksiness, reminding me of Walter Benjamin's comment that "all great works of literature found a genre or dissolve one — that they are, in other words, special cases".

This is a special case.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £5.99 contact CultureShop

Bang to rights and wrongs

Alain de Botton

An Intelligent Person's
Guide to Ethics
by Mary Warnock
Duckworth 128pp £12.95

MARY WARNOCK has spent a highly distinguished career delivering exactly what most people expect, but almost never get from philosophers: rational investigation of the trickiest questions of everyday life. Socrates would have got on well with Warnock, because what unites them is a concern — all too rare in the history of philosophy — with practical ethics, with values and issues of right and wrong, together with a willingness to step out of the study into the public arena.

Warnock's new book admirably fulfils the brief of its title. It begins by asking why ethics, ostensibly the most useful and interesting branch of philosophy, should have been so neglected by British and American philosophers this century. Much of the damage was done by logical positivism, in particular A J Ayer's Language, Truth And Logic, which argued that philosophers should [illegible] from practical ethical questions and stick instead to mathematical or logical statements. The other disastrous influence was G E Moore's Principia Ethica, a hugely influential book which (astonishingly) suggested that all rational people had an intuitive and infallible knowledge of what was good, so there was little point wasting mental energies in further discussion.

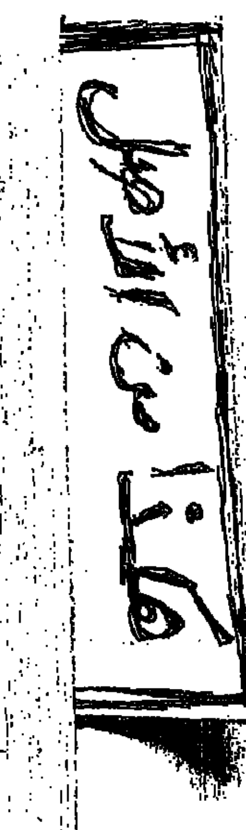
But Warnock has throughout her career taken a quite opposing stance. "There are questions that must be asked about values, what we value and why," she writes here, explaining that moral philosophers have a responsibility to engage with real issues and "engender practical understanding". (For evidence that Warnock has practised exactly what she preaches, one can cite her chairmanship of two landmark government inquiries, the 1977 report on special needs education and the 1982 inquiry into human fertilisation and embryology.) Otherwise the large questions will simply be left to what she terms "the pub bore", someone who will gruffly say, "I think it's disgusting. There ought to be a law against it."

This book fearlessly tackles a host of the favourite topics of pub bores. Warnock first considers euthanasia, and patiently clears up a lot of illogicalities. For instance, she takes apart the vague yet widespread notion that certain medical practices should be stopped on the grounds that they are "unnatural". As Warnock explains, this cannot be the basis of criticism, for one could then "on the same grounds object to curing appendicitis by means of surgery. We tend to regard as 'natural' those medical interventions to which we are accustomed, and which are often successful. Nothing could be less 'natural' than a plastic hip joint. Yet hip replacement surgery is seldom objected to on the apparently ethical grounds that it is contrary to nature."

Warnock is also keen to dispel "the slippery slope" argument, frequently invoked to halt any kind of euthanasia or embryology. Yet it makes no sense to ban either simply because they have threatening and extreme versions. Another chapter is dedicated to a discussion of rights. The last half-century has seen a huge extension in the concept of "rights", and one regularly hears people saying that they have a "right" to decent transport or a job, or indeed to happiness.

[illegible] that these things are highly desirable, but she laments the "increasing tendency to believe that everything desirable may be claimed as a right". Instead, she asserts that we should limit the use of the word to something that is legally enforceable, that refers to a contract and that one can properly prevent other people from infringing. She picks on the Unicef Charter for Children's Rights as an example of a typically confused use of the word "right". The Charter declared that children had a right to play and exercise their imagination in free speech and in the arts: wonderful ideals, but, in Warnock's eyes, not things one could accurately label as rights. It is because we have the capacity to choose between right and wrong that it is worthwhile to philosophise about the difference.

She has the good sense to point out that we all feel free, that we all feel we have a choice, and stresses that this alone can justify the importance of ethics. This book will serve as an excellent introduction to ethical study, and is also an impassioned and moving summary of Warnock's own life-long dedication to ethical thinking.



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She's no shrinking Violet

Paul Evans

WHILE much of the world is wracked by strange and freakish weather bringing massive destruction and misery to millions, here it rains, and rains, and rains. The days when the sun comes out, and fields of barley crackle as they ripen with a noise like radio static are few and far between this summer, which appears destined to go down as the soggiest on record. The woods hang from Wenlock Edge like wet washing. When the wind gets up the trees flap and shake out wood pigeons, which are flung like sodden rags into the sky. Under foot, despite all the rain, many slopes are still quite dry. The growing season is winding down and flowering things are charging up their seeds.

There's a thick, apprehensive shade under the pattering canopy of ash. Something stirs in the shadows from the grey hill-wash clay, a ghostly presence, strange and exotic. Although it seems to belong to a seasonal pulse which issues far beyond this place, it has an ancient tenure in these woods. Even if you didn't know exactly what it was, you'd guess straight away that it belonged to the mysterious world of orchids.

I've harboured a suspicion that an enthusiasm for orchids is a sign of repressed sexuality. If that condition were embodied in a heroine of romantic fiction she could be named after this plant — Violet Helleborine. And here she is: a few scattered examples growing from bare soil on a slope which in spring was a dense lawn of wild garlic.

The leaf undersides have an inky purple stain, and the small, green flower buds are still tight on the curving stem, waiting for that moment when the smouldering passion bursts. I've been watching for a couple of weeks and she's still smouldering.

This sort of orchid, *Epipactis purpurata*, which is about at its northern limit here, belongs to what botanists call the "continental element" of our local flora. Many species have their homeland in central Europe and some extend westwards to the Atlantic coast and eastwards in to Russia and Asia. This helleborine originates in continental Europe and links this part of Shropshire more to the south than to the Atlantic west.

We are accustomed, in our own little island way, to assume that our native plants are identifiably British and that rare species are part of what we like to call our natural heritage. In fact many rare species are just coping with life at the edge of their natural range of distribution and are quite common elsewhere in Europe.

Endemic species, those which only occur in Britain, are fairly rare. The flora of the county I live in, for example, is made up of 15 geographic elements, including the continental, and has plants which range from North America, the Mediterranean, the Arctic and Asia. And these are plants which arrived here after the last Ice Age and do not include those which have been introduced by humans. Nature knows no political boundaries; plants carry no passports. Many of the plants which make our local places special are also those which form a bond of commonality with other parts of the Earth.

W A Leighton, in the introduction to the orchid section in his 1841 Flora of the Shropshire Region, quotes Sir Walter Scott: "The book of Nature is before us, — that noblest of volumes — where we are ever called to wonder and to admire, even when we cannot understand". In Nature's book, violet helleborine is working a spell.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Chess Leonard Barden

WHILE opening variations may be tested several times within a few days, it's rare for a tactical theme to recur so quickly. When it happened in last month's junior events at Witley, Surrey, two Whites resigned at move 19 after they both missed sacrifices based on a black bishop check on the h6-c1 diagonal.

F Kruger (SA) v M Broomfield

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e6 7 f3 Be7 8 Qd2 b5 9 0-0-0? 9 g4! **b4 10 Na4 Qa5 11 b3 Bd7 12 Nb2 Nc6 13 Nxc6 Bxc6 14 Nc4?** Better 14 a4 d5, though Black stands well.
Qxa2 15 Nxd6+ Kf8! 16 Qxb4 Rd8 17 Bc5 Nxe4! 18 fxe4 Bg5+ 19 Resigns. If 19 Rd2 Qa1 mate.

E Rapoport (Israel) v D Moskovic

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 h3 0-0 6 Bg5 Na6 7 Bd3 Qe8 8 Nge2 e5 9 d5 Nfd7 10 g4 Ndc5 11 Bb1 f5 12 exf5? 12 gxf5 gxf5 13 Ng3 is normal.
gxf5 13 Ng3 e4! 14 gxf5 Nd3+ 15 Bxd3 exd3+ 16 Kd2 Bxf5 17 Nxf5? 17 Be3 resists. **Rxf5 18 Be3 Rxf2+! 19 Resigns.** If 19 Bxf2 Bh6+ 20 Kxd3 Nb4+ 21 Kd4 Qe5 or Bg7 mate.

England's promising players aged 17-21 dominated the Smith & Williamson Young Masters, won by Simon Ansell with 6½/9, and scored a notable success in the under-17 Witley team event, winning 13-11 against a US squad rated on average 100 Fide points stronger.

But in the European youth championships at Mureck, Austria, the U14s were crushed 19½ – 4½ by the US, and finished only 4½ points ahead of Yugoslavia, who lost 18 games by default. Some strong U14s were omitted and the board order was arranged by old British Chess Federation grades rather than by England junior selectors using up-to-date form.

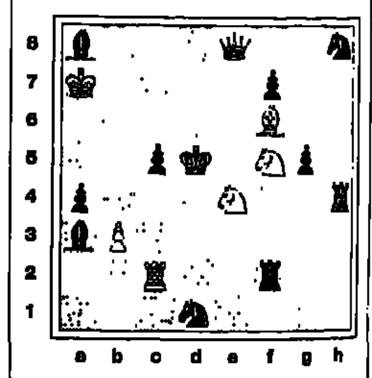
Russia, Georgia and Ukraine won 15 of the 30 medals for both male and female age groups, from U18 to [illegible] land totals were 5½/9.

This similar pattern to last year's world and European contests in these younger age groups is no accident. Ex-Soviet states still maintain the old talent-spotting and coaching system run by masters, where the best prospects are identified at age seven or eight, and they use the new extra places facility in Fide championships to send squads of up to four or five boys and girls, including U9s and U8s, to the world and European U10s and U12s.

Other leading junior chess countries such as the US, China and India have adopted this early talent system — which England pioneered in the 1970s and 1980s.

Sadly, England now probably sends fewer U10s, 12s and 14s to such events than any other major chess country. Not surprisingly, therefore, England now ranks in younger age groups behind the likes of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

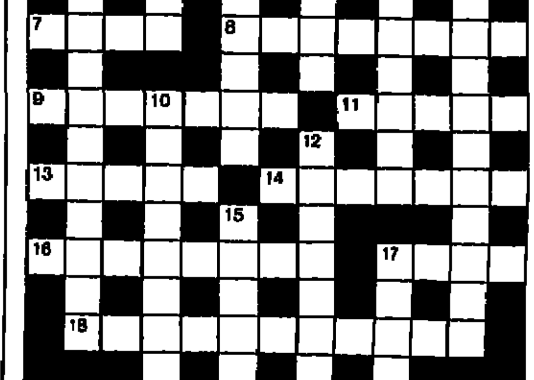
No 2536



White mates in two moves, against any defence (by V Udartsev, 1949).

No 2535: (c) wins after 1 . . . Qc5! 2 Qxc5 (2 b4 Qc6) R4xc5 3 Nxd5 Rxc2 4 Nxf6+ Kg7. (a) is unclear to drawish after Rxc3 2 Rxc3 Bxc3 3 Qe7 Qe8 4 Qxg5+ Kf7.
Atkins [illegible] Rxc2 3 Rxc2 Qxc2 4 Nxf6+ Kf7 5 Qd6! Kxf6 6 Be5+ Kf5 7 f3! and White mates.

Quick crossword no. 431



Across

5 Keyboard musician (5,6)
7 Cut down — mountain (4)
8 Strong praise (8)
9 Drop (7)
11 Self-evident truth (5)
13 Refuse — edible entrails (5)
14 Disjointed (7)
16 Tools, implements, cutlery, etc (8)
17 Dissolute man (4)
18 Venus (7,4)

Down

1 Shout (4)
2 Drug (7)
3 Wedge — poor golf shot! (5)
4 Word blindness (8)
5 Something to eat — easily obtained (5,2,4)
6 Kniphofia (3-3,5)
10 Candle-maker (8)
12 Area of land (7)
15 Sudden feeling of terror (5)
17 Ceremony (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

ALMOST 20 years ago, the longest period of domination by a single team in the game of bridge came to an end. Italy's Blue Team were beaten in the final of the World Championship, ending a run of victories the like of which had never been seen before — and, I venture to say, will never be seen again.

After that, the game went into something of a decline in Italy, and it is only recently that their players have once again started to perform strongly on the international stage. Italy are the reigning European Champions at Open level — and now they are the reigning European Champions at both junior (under 25) and schools (under 20) level as well.

Their schools team turned in a quite amazing performance at last month's Junior European Championships. Of 13 matches, they lost only one.

The British performance was simply too erratic to succeed at this level of play. They contrived some emphatic victories over many of the top teams, and some incomprehensible defeats against the also-rans. On today's deal, they were the victims of one of the most far-sighted defensive plays I have ever seen. Look at the East and North cards only, and see if you can defeat South's contract of five clubs:

	North	
	♠ 6 ♥ A K Q 7 6 ♦ Q 10 3 ♣ J 7 3 2	
West ♠ A 10 9 5 3 ♥ J 9 4 2 ♦ K 8 2 ♣ 10		**East** ♠ K 8 7 2 ♥ 10 8 5 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ A 8 5
	South ♠ Q J 4 ♥ 3 ♦ A J 9 4 ♣ K Q 9 6 4	

This has been the bidding:

South	West	North	East
Jones	Wijma	Bakhshi	Zwerver
1♣	1♠	3♥(1)	3♠
Pass	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Hearts and clubs, a "fit-showing jump" as they call it.

West, Schelte Wijma of the Netherlands, led the ace of spades. He might have been forgiven for taking one look at dummy's hearts and switching to a diamond, which would have cost the contract at once. But East, Friso Zwerver, played an encouraging spade under the ace despite dummy's singleton, so West accurately continued the suit. Martin Jones for Britain ruffed in the dummy and led a club to his king, East ducking. Jones ruffed his remaining spade loser on the table, and led another trump. Zwerver won with the ace, and . . .

It looks, does it not, the most natural thing in the world to switch to a diamond through declarer's hand. But if Zwerver had done that, Jones would have won with the ace (placing West with the king for his overcall), and run the rest of his trumps. On the last of these, West would have been forced to discard from his four hearts and the king of diamonds, and whatever he did would obviously be fatal.

But Zwerver did not play a diamond. Instead, he switched to a heart into the teeth of dummy's mighty suit. This left declarer helpless — he could run his trumps, but he would have no entry to dummy's hearts in the end game. As his only chance, he took the diamond finesse. One down.

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Football Charity Shield: Arsenal 3 Manchester United 0

Arsenal write an epitaph to United

David Lacey at Wembley

THIS time the FA Charity Shield provided not so much a prologue to the new season as a postscript to the old. Certainly for Manchester United, well beaten by the Double winners Arsenal, the occasion was more of an epitaph, a reminder of why they had finished their last campaign untypically empty-handed.

At least finishing runners-up to Arsène Wenger's team in the Premiership assured United of a chance to reach for the Champions League via the second qualifying round, in which they will meet LKS Lodz this week, with the return in Poland a fortnight later. It is a hurdle Alex Ferguson's players should overcome, although the fitful nature of last Sunday's performance suggested last season's problems, far from going away, are already threatening to multiply.

Charity Shield games are, by tradition, sparring sessions which rarely offer meaningful clues about how the leading teams are going to shape up. If United are lucky this will again turn out to be the case, for the way they played made a nonsense of their ebullient form on their Scandinavian tour. They were undone by the qualities which had enabled Arsenal to deny United their fifth championship in six seasons.

Wembley will be Arsenal's home from home this season in the Champions League — Highbury's capacity being too small to accommodate the level of support the coming European campaign will attract. They won the Charity Shield much in the manner of a home team, achieving little during the first half-hour but rarely looking like losing the game once Marc Overmars put them ahead in the 34th minute.

The form the Dutchman found after last Christmas largely inspired the long winning sequence which enabled Wenger's side to overtake United at the top, and here his pace on the left again turned events in Arsenal's favour. This time last year doubts were expressed about the depth of Wenger's squad compared with the talent available to Ferguson, but the way Arsenal kept their shape and momentum amid a proliferation of substitutions in the second half suggested that balance has shifted the other way.

Ferguson, for example, is still looking for a striker of sufficient quality to make United a power again both at home and abroad. Wenger, by contrast took off both Overmars and Dennis Bergkamp, who had a tightened hamstring, and was still able to pose an attacking threat through Christopher Wreh and Luis Boa Morte.

Nicolas Anelka, whose form in the latter half of last season enhanced Arsenal's drive for the title and persuaded Wenger that he could afford to offload Ian Wright to West Ham, stayed on for the 90 minutes, much to the discomfort of Jaap Stam, the centre-back for whom Manchester United paid PSV Eindhoven $17.5 million as a replacement for Gary Pallister, recently sold to Middlesbrough.

Perhaps they thought they were paying this sum in guilders. Either way it continues to look an exorbitant amount for a defender whose solid tackling is offset by his lack of speed on the turn.

The enduring strength of Arsenal's central defenders, and in particular Tony Adams, will always sharpen the contrast when opponents make mistakes at the back. Adams looked far happier coping with the tireless but limited efforts of Andy Cole than trying to track down stray Romanians in the World Cup.

Arsenal's French midfield pair, Patrick Vieira and Emmanuel Petit, had certainly more vivid World Cup memories than any of those around or against them who had been involved in the finals. For a time it looked as though their thoughts still lay trapped in the celebrations barely a month earlier.

United enjoyed their best period while Vieira and Petit were re-tuning their concentration. Roy Keane, playing his first competitive game since damaging cruciate ligaments 11 months earlier, appeared to have restored important solidity to the United midfield.

David Beckham was subjected to the moronic booing which, after his dismissal in the World Cup and its effect on England's fortunes, will be the player's lot for some while. But he still played with skill and intelligence. Ryan Giggs was full of pace and penetration.

With Teddy Sheringham on the bench, however, United's movements lacked a focal point, not to mention the strength in the air necessary to challenge Arsenal's defence. Ferguson's failure so far to sign an alternative to Sheringham could revive his importance at Old Trafford. True, he did drag his team's best chance wide late on, after replacing Cole, but at least he had put himself in a position to score.

By then United's afternoon had long lost its point. They never really recovered from falling behind 11 minutes before half-time to a goal which punished muddled defending.

Vieira's long pass dropped to Bergkamp in the penalty area with neither centre-back closing the Dutchman down. Bergkamp's back-heel was intercepted by Ronny Johnsen, but the ball then bounced off Anelka to Overmars, who hooked it past Peter Schmeichel.

As the United substitutions increased, so their football became cramped and even more vulnerable to the pace on Arsenal's flanks. Four minutes before the hour Overmars and Anelka worked the ball to Wreh, who darted through a yawning gap to increase their lead. United fell further behind after 72 minutes. Ray Parlour's searching pass found Anelka who held off the challenge of Stam to beat Schmeichel at his near post.

Two in front . . . Christopher Wreh fires his side's second goal past Peter Schmeichel PHOTO: ANDREW REDINGTON

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Banned swimmer claims conspiracy

MICHELLE DE BRUIN, who as Michelle Smith won three Olympic gold medals for swimming for Ireland in the 1996 Games, claimed she is the victim of a conspiracy by the sport's world governing body Fina, after being banned for four years for attempting to manipulate a drugs test.

The 28-year-old swimmer said: "I firmly believe there's been a concerted effort by Fina to ensure that I do not swim again." At a press conference in Dublin, Smith denied that she had tried to tamper with a urine sample at her home in Kells, Co Kilkenny, on January 10 by pouring whiskey into it in an attempt to mask performance-enhancing drugs.

She escaped a life ban, but the four-year suspension will effectively end her career, ruling her out of the 2000 Sydney Olympics. De Bruin said she had never tested positive for any banned substance throughout her career, adding: "I will prove my innocence in this matter. We now go on to the appeal process which, I know, will prove my total innocence. I will also be seeking damages for the distress I have been caused."

De Bruin: drugs denial

MANCHESTER UNITED, Arsenal and Liverpool have told the Premier League that they will put on hold any plans to join a breakaway European Super League until next month. However, the three clubs were warned that if they go back on their word they will face disciplinary action, including expulsion from the Premiership. The FA Premier League is determined to resist any attempts to break away by persuading potential rebels to stay on board and work for changes in European club competition from within. The matter is to be discussed by all 20 Premiership clubs on September 3 in London.

INCREASED revenues from television and higher ticket prices are going abroad, or straight into players' wages, according to a report. The Deloitte & Touche Review of Football Finance reveals that Premiership clubs saw their turnover rise in 1996-97 by $190 million on the previous year to $760 million, with almost a quarter of that spent on buying foreign players. By comparison, only $23 million flowed from the Premiership clubs to the Football League teams in the same period. Players' salaries are increasing by $95 million, year on year.

COLIN HENDRY, the 32-year-old Scotland centre-half, has joined Rangers from Blackburn Rovers for nearly $6.6 million after seven years at Ewood Park. His arrival coincided with the departure of Ally McCoist, who moved to Kilmarnock after 15 years at Ibrox. Hendry, who agreed a four-year contract, is the eighth signing of Rangers' new coach Dick Advocaat. The Argentina World Cup defender

Meanwhile Nelson Vivas agreed to move to Arsenal from the Swiss club Lugano for an undisclosed fee. The English Double winners' other summer signing is the French teenager David Grondin, who cost $820,000.

THE Australian Cricket Board called for the development of computers and cameras to deliver foolproof leg-before verdicts. Video replays are currently available to umpires in international matches, but they have been used only for run-outs, stumpings, boundary calls and to assess whether catches have been taken cleanly. But according to the board's national umpiring manager, Tony Crafter, there is no reason why, in the next year or so, leg-before decisions should not be delivered with the benefit of new technology.

Football results

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One:
Barnsley 2, West Brom 2; Bradford C 1, Stockport 2; Bristol City 2, Oxford Utd 2; Bury 1, Huddersfield 0; C Palace 2, Bolton 2; Grimsby 0, Ipswich 0; Norwich 2, Crewe 1; Port Vale 0, Birmingham 2; Portsmouth 1, Watford 2; Sheff Utd 2, Swindon 1; Sunderland 1, QPR 0; Wolves 2, Tranmere 0.

Division Two:
Bournemth 2, Lincoln 0; Burnley 2, Bristol R 1; Colchester 1, Chesterfld 0; Gillingham 0, Walsall 1; Macclesfld 0, Fulham 1; Man City 3, Blackpool 0; Northmptn 1, Stoke 3; Oldham 1, Notts Co 3; Preston 3, York 0; Wigan 0, Millwall 1; Wrexham 3, Reading 0; Wycombe 0, Luton 1.

Division Three:
Brentford 3, Mansfield 0; Carlisle 1, Brighton 0, Chester 0, Leyton O 2; Darlington 0, Barnet 2; Hartlepool 1, Cardiff 1; Peterboro 0, Halifax 2; Plymouth 2, Rochdale 1; Rotherham 3, Hull 1; Scarboro 1, Southend 2; Shrewsbury 2, Sc'thorpe 1; Swansea 2, Exeter 0; Torquay 0, Cambridge 1.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE CUP:
Second round:
Berwick 1, Falkirk 5; Dundee 0, Alloa 1; Dundee United 2, Stirling A 2 (Dundee United won on penalties); East Fife 0, Motherwell 1; Morton 0, Ross Co 1; Hamilton 1, Hibernian 2; Livingston 1, Dunfrmline 0; Raith 2, Clydebank 0; Stenhsmr 0, Airdrie 2; St Johnstn 3, Stranraer 0; St Mirren 1, Ayr 3; Invrnss CT 0, Aberdeen 3.

Golf German Open

Sting in Allan's victory tale

Gordon Richardson in Bad Saarow

STEPHEN ALLAN, a young Australian, proved it pays to keep plugging away as he came from four behind to win the German Open at the Berlin Sporting Club last Sunday. The defending champion Ignacio Garrido, on the other hand, must be ruminating on squandering such an advantage.

When he birdied the 10th the 24-year-old Allan, a second-year professional from Melbourne, was just hoping for a sizeable consolation prize. But he took the $230,000 jackpot after a 69 for 280, eight under par, despite running up a six at the par-three 13th.

Allan, who soldiered on despite being stung on the wrist by a wasp on the third tee, birdied the 11th and 12th but was four adrift once more after heaving his tee shot unplayably into the bushes to run up that triple bogey at the next. To his credit he kept his head down and came back with gutsy birdies from 15ft and 8ft at the 15th and 16th.

He could not believe his luck when Garrido, two holes behind, took two in a bunker at the same short 13th for a five, then three-putted the next and bogeyed the short 17th as well for a 74 and 281.

